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New York

President:	Mr. Aboulatta	(Egypt)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Llorentty Solíz
	China	Mr. Wu Haitao
	Ethiopia	Ms. Guadey
	France	Mrs. Gueguen
	Italy	Mr. Lambertini
	Japan	Mr. Kawamura
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Sadykov
	Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
	Senegal	Mr. Seck
	Sweden	Mr. Skau
	Ukraine	Mr. Vitrenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rycroft
	United States of America	Ms. Sison
	Uruguay	Mr. Bermúdez

Agenda

Peace and security in Africa

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Peace and security in Africa

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Nigeria to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Téte António, Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to warmly welcome the Deputy Secretary-General, Ms. Amina Mohammed, and to give her the floor.

The Deputy Secretary-General: I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for this opportunity to brief the Council on my recent visit to Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. This undertaking, from 19 to 27 July, was the first of its kind — a high-level mission focused entirely on women and peace and security and development. I was pleased to be joined by the Executive Director of UN-Women and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, both of whom are here with me today, as well as Ms. Bineta Diop, the African Union Commission's Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security. We were four African women from two organizations, visiting two countries, with one goal — advancing peace by advancing the equality, empowerment and well-being of women. This reflects both the Secretary-General's vision and the Security Council's agenda, as embodied initially in resolution 1325 (2000) and reaffirmed most recently in resolution 2242 (2015).

The mission also deepened the partnership between the United Nations and the African Union (AU), as we work together to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the African Union's Agenda 2063, as well as the accompanying Joint United Nations-African Union Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security, signed in April on the initiative of the Secretary-General. I am pleased that the Permanent Observer from the African Union will be briefing the Council alongside me today, reinforcing the joint nature of our mission. In that broad context, I would like to share with the Council some of what we saw and heard, as well as some thoughts on what we must do now.

In both countries, we met with Heads of State, ministers, donors, diplomats, faith leaders, Parliaments and the United Nations mission and country teams. We made a point of spending the lion's share of our time with the women and girls most affected by conflicts, including in visits to camps for internally displaced persons. While each country is unique, the situations share some commonalities. Both have dismally low levels of women's participation in politics and are experiencing conflicts marked by extremely high levels of sexual- and gender-based violence. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, sexual violence is widespread. In northern Nigeria, abductions, forced marriage and the use of women as suicide bombers have taken a terrible toll, and in the camps, sexual exploitation, including in the form of sex for food, is a new and alarming trend. The international community must better understand the role of women in development and peacebuilding, together with the gender dimensions of conflict, if our responses are to be effective.

Both countries are also in the grip of grave humanitarian crises. In Nigeria, the eight-year conflict in the North-East has generated a risk of famine, displaced 1.9 million people and left 8.5 million in need of assistance. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 7 million people need assistance and 3.8 million are displaced, the largest internally displaced population in Africa and one of the worst such situations in the world. Those dire circumstances are being made worse by a large gap in humanitarian funding, including the issue of failures to meet the commitments made at the Oslo Humanitarian Conference on Nigeria and the Lake Chad Region. There is an acute need for sustained and scaled-up funding to avert famine in Nigeria and address the humanitarian crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Beyond those immediate concerns, since both crises are rooted in conflict, poverty and political challenges, they will require regional political solutions and integrated responses that cut across historically siloed approaches.

Let me turn now to some of the specifics of each. In Nigeria, we were moved by our meeting with the Chibok girls — facilitated by the Honourable Minister of

Women Affairs. Their remarkable strength as survivors, rather than victims, is inspiring. Many are receiving an education and psychosocial support to prepare them for reintegration. But thousands of other young women who have been abducted and returned, subjected to sexual violence and affected by conflict in other ways have yet to receive adequate support. We also interacted with displaced women and girls who are facing exploitation and abuse in the camps. We held meetings with women's leaders who underscored the need to address mental health and women's empowerment.

I commend the Governments of the Niger, Chad, Cameroon and Nigeria for their efforts to promote stability, including through the Multinational Joint Task Force within the Lake Chad Basin regional cooperation. International support will continue to be crucial in addressing the root causes of the crisis in those very complex situations.

I am also pleased to note that since our visit, the Acting President of Nigeria has established a judicial commission to investigate alleged violations of human rights by Nigerian security agencies, and to recommend ways to prevent such violations. I commend that initiative and encourage the relevant authorities to include sexual- and gender-based violence within the commission's work. The United Nations stands ready to support that important effort and also to reinforce protection measures for displaced women and girls.

The situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo remains complex and volatile, with State and non-State armed actors alike perpetuating violence and the illicit flows of natural resources and deepening political tensions, including over the delayed elections. There are real risks of increased political instability and deepening crises if the 31 December 2016 agreement becomes irrelevant.

We are all aware of those and other challenges, yet we also see a real opportunity to get the country on track towards stability. In all of our meetings, we emphasized the need to respect and implement the 31 December agreement and the willingness of the United Nations to provide its support. That endeavour will require further investment, not a scaling back of our capacities and resources. While it is imperative to ensure the most efficient use of available resources, particularly in a fiscally constrained environment, it is equally critical that mitigating measures are taken to avail vulnerable populations of the level of protection they need. In that respect, I commend the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) for the steps taken to mitigate the possible impact of the closure of its bases in some locations and for its efforts to develop and implement a more holistic approach to the protection of civilians.

We commend the efforts of the Government, including through the appointment of a personal representative of the President on sexual violence and child recruitment, to decrease incidents of conflict-related sexual violence committed by the security forces and to take real steps towards delisting from the Secretary-General's reports on conflict-related sexual violence. Those efforts must continue, along with our pledged support, until we reach zero.

At the time of our visit, the electoral commission had registered more than 80 per cent of voters. That number now stands at more than 90 per cent, with registration expected to be accelerated in the Kasais following the calming of tensions. Of those registered, 48 per cent are women, placing the country in the same bracket as more established democracies, such as the Solomon Islands and Paraguay. The collection of sex-disaggregated data is itself commendable, as is the provision on gender parity in the constitution, which should now be supported and translated into law.

In that regard, we had lengthy conversations with President Kabila, who has committed to releasing an elections calendar and to holding elections that are violence-free and Congolese-led, but where international observers will be welcome. We welcome that commitment and look forward to the early release of that electoral calendar.

The United Nations-AU delegation met with women in Goma who were being moved as a result of the closing of an internally displaced persons camp where they had lived for years in barely life sustaining conditions. Despite those hardships, some women did not want to return to their communities without assurances that a key means of support in the camps — microcredit — would continue to be available. While it was not possible to delay the closure of any of the camps, I am encouraged to note that our intervention made it possible for some of the women to remain in local communities and to continue to be supported through the micro-credit programmes that have been facilitated by UN-Women. For these women, security is a matter of financial empowerment. I thank

the donors that are generously supporting these efforts and call on all to do even more.

We also met with women who have no choice but to cook with coal in their tents, at great risk to their health and that of their children. Those tents were their only shelter and coal was their only accessible mode of sustenance and heat.

We asked about the future of those women and their families upon the closure of the camp and were informed that the United Nations does not have the funds or capacity to shift from humanitarian assistance to support host communities or the reintegrated individuals. While we may debate the humanitarian-development nexus philosophically here in New York, without resources flowing to both sectors simultaneously and a real investment in early recovery, we can neither sustain peace nor prevent future gender-based violence. In that spirit, I encourage donors to respond to the Democratic Republic of the Congo's reintegration challenges at this time — based on need, and need alone.

While in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, our delegation was briefed on MONUSCO's investigation into the murder of two experts working for the United Nations. The report on that horrific incident, which I strongly condemn, is to be published shortly, and I would like to reiterate the need for thorough investigations and justice for the perpetrators of that crime. The United Nations will continue to support that effort until justice is served.

I would like to thank the many dedicated men and women with whom we met during our important and productive journey, in particular my colleagues in MONUSCO, especially the women, whose work was greatly appreciated by all we met, as well as the United Nations country team in both countries — and within them UN-Women, whose efforts to support the empowerment of women is so crucial. I am most grateful for the invaluable contribution from to the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict.

I would also like to express my gratitude and thanks to the African Union as a partner in progress. Its partnership is invaluable as we strive to continue to work together to stabilize the region, to advance the Silencing the Guns by 2020 initiative, and to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the African Union's Agenda 2063.

One message resounds most — investing in women and girls must be central to our efforts in Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and beyond if we are to have sustainable peace and development. Giving special consideration to the context will be key to the responses that deliver the right results. We look forward to working with national Governments, regional organizations, civil society, women and girls themselves and international partners to deliver results that will advance peace, development and dignity for all.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank the Deputy Secretary-General for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. António.

Mr. António: Since this is the first time that the African Union (AU) is taking the floor at the Security Council since the start of the presidency of the Arab Republic of Egypt, let me join the voice of the African Union in commending you, Sir, and supporting the activities of your presidency for the month of August.

I would like to sincerely thank the Deputy Secretary-General, Ms. Amina Mohammed, for her very detailed briefing on the mission, for her vision, her commitment and contributions to finding, in concert with the African Union, sustainable solutions for a peaceful and stable Africa. The Deputy Secretary-General, together with the African Union Commission's Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security, Ms. Bineta Diop; the Executive Director of UN-Women and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka; and the United Nations Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Pramila Patten, played a key role in the realization of the joint United Nations-AU high-level solidarity mission in Nigeria and in the Democratic Republic of the Congo that took place from 19 to 27 July 2017. Ms. Bineta Diop would have loved to join today's meeting but due to unforeseen circumstances, she could not be here with us today.

The joint United Nations-African Union (AU) solidarity mission, which was carried out in the context of the High-Level Women Leaders Forum for Africa's Transformation that took place in New York from 31 May to 2 June, allowed both organizations to better assess the positive role that women can play to advance peace, security and development. The joint United Nations-AU solidarity mission also reinforced our understanding, at both the policy and operational levels, that it is possible

to have significant and positive impacts on the lives of vulnerable populations only if and when the African Union, the United Nations, Governments, civil society organizations and women and youth all join together in their efforts. We witnessed that throughout the mission, joint efforts engendered unprecedented perseverance for the realization of common objectives.

Africa is a strategic region for the stability of the world, and women and youth play a pivotal role in the promotion of peace, security and development. The African Union Commission remains a key partner of the United Nations for the implementation at the continental level of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want.

The African Union is also at the forefront in the implementation phase of the landmark Joint United Nations-African Union Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security, which was signed in April by Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Mr. Moussa Faki Mahamat. The landmark document recognizes two strategic points for collaboration between the AU and the United Nations. The first point that the document stresses is that "African peace and security challenges are too complex for any single organization to adequately address on its own". Secondly, it notes the need for the African Union and the United Nations to "work together to identify and respond to indicators of potential conflict and plan for prevention"

It is in that spirit of prevention and intensified collaborative efforts that the Chairperson of the African Union Commission delegated the AU Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security to the joint United Nations-AU solidarity mission, thereby reaffirming his commitment to the advancement of the role of women in peace processes across the continent.

The changing nature of conflicts has highlighted alarming challenges, including the worsening humanitarian situations to which the Deputy Secretary-General referred, as well as increased violent extremism. Dire humanitarian challenges, such as those seen in the north-east of Nigeria and the East and Kasai regions of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, significantly impact the well-being of communities, particularly of women and girls. Furthermore, armed groups such as Boko Haram are increasingly using young girls as agents of violence and suicide bombers. Just days before the visit of the joint United Nations-AU delegation to Maiduguri, four Boko Haram suicide bombers killed 19 people in a series of attacks. It was later reported that one of the four suicide bombers was a young woman. In order to curtail such a worrisome trend and avoid marginalization that can lead to exclusion and radicalization, there is a need to support the social and economic empowerment of women.

To date, there is no solution to the problem of transnational actors constantly changing their ways of operating, except by effectively and rapidly adapting to the changing conflict patterns and dire consequences of vulnerable populations. In that regard, the African Union strongly condemns the continued violations of women's and children's rights, the erosion of their well-being and all forms of violence perpetrated against them in conflict-affected countries or countries emerging from conflict.

It is no coincidence that the joint United Nations-AU solidarity mission was undertaken under the theme, "Revitalizing women's participation and leadership in peace, security and development". Both the AU and the United Nations have recognized the importance of women's participation and leadership in peace, security and development initiatives. The mission brought greater visibility to the role that African women can play in advancing prevention, peace, security, the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063. Additionally, the high-level delegation offered a unique platform to bring the voices and experiences of women on the ground to the ears of those in positions of leadership of their respective countries, including Heads of State, Foreign Ministers and Members of Parliament. The delegation was able to receive first-hand information from women and young women leaders actively working on the ground, related to a number of key needs, including reinforcing ground actions for peace, security and development, empowering women through quality education and capacity-building for employment, and offering them the necessary infrastructures to support their physical and mental rehabilitation in countries enduring conflicts or emerging from conflicts.

The African Union continues to support the rehabilitation and empowerment of internally displaced persons and survivors of sexual violence. In the context of the Oslo Humanitarian Conference on Nigeria and the Lake Chad Basin Region held in February, the AU Peace and Security Council, in its session on 19 July, called on the international community to provide necessary

assistance that is commensurate to the needs of affected people in humanitarian emergencies. It is also necessary to ensure rapid disbursement of pledges made in order to alleviate the current humanitarian crisis.

In that spirit, the African Union commends the new United Nations Humanitarian Fund of over $10.5 million, which has been allocated to help women, children and men in need of life-saving humanitarian assistance, in line with the Nigeria Humanitarian Fund. We acknowledge that more joint humanitarian efforts and assistance remain to be delivered in conflict-affected regions of the Democratic Republic of the Congo by the international community.

The African Union will continue to work closely with the United Nations to support conflict-affected populations, including displaced and host communities, that are suffering from peace and security crises, humanitarian emergencies and development deficits, including the understated risk of famine. In that regard, the AU commends the unprecedented efforts of its member States and first responders to refugee and humanitarian crises, such as the crisis in Uganda.

The joint United Nations-AU solidarity mission highlighted key recommendations that are essential if we are to achieve overall sustainable peace, security and development. First, it is necessary to enhance focus on enabling the empowerment and return of internally displaced persons and refugees, particularly women and children. Secondly, there is a need to facilitate the stabilization of countries facing challenges related peace and security by providing them with the necessary human, financial and expert support, particularly through enhanced women's participation. Thirdly, we must enhance access for humanitarian organizations, in accordance with the African Union Peace and Security Council's mandate and peace and security architecture. Finally, it is necessary to enhance women and youth's effective participation in conflict prevention, mediation, electoral processes and decision-making in order to allow them to act as agents of peace.

As the African Union and the United Nations seek to underline the role of women in peace, security and development in Africa, I would like to stress that the joint United Nations-AU solidarity mission also took place in the spirit of the priority actions set for the initiative of the African Women Leaders Network, which was launched by the African Union Commission in partnership with United Nations Women and Germany.

The African Women Leaders Network aims to bolster the leadership of women in governance, peace and security, all in the interest of transforming Africa. The Network represents an entry point for an enhanced United Nations and African Union partnership and a specific contribution to the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), which was introduced by Namibia in 2000. The tripartite partnership of the African Union, UN-Women and Germany behind the African Women Leaders Network has set the goal of generating sustainable and concrete actions for women in Africa, in line with African Union and United Nations commitments to prevention and delivering tangible solutions on the ground.

The action plan of the African Women Leaders Network reinforced the need to create a fund within the platform that can address concrete issues on the ground, such as the capacity-building of women and young girls through education and the reinforcement of educational infrastructure by building schools and support centres. The need to strengthen educational, physical and mental support systems proved vital during the fruitful exchanges of the high-level delegation with women and young girls on the ground. Education and capacity-building will offer the necessary platform for women, girls and communities at large to heighten awareness on gender-based issues, including on addressing sexual violence.

Our joint findings on the ground have confirmed what women and girls affected by conflict and humanitarian tragedies are able and willing to manage camp activities, which serve as support systems for other survivors and assist in the rehabilitation and reintegration processes through microfund financing and peer support. The solidarity mission in Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo allowed for the conclusion of discussion on the importance of the capacity-building of institutions and justice systems in countries in conflict or emerging from conflict. The African Union Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security will brief the African Union Peace and Security Council on the specific outcomes of the joint United Nations-African Union solidarity mission.

In closing, it is recognized that no single organization can on its own ensure global peace and security. There is therefore a need for the African Union and the United Nations to work closely to achieve peace and security in Africa. Our efforts must continue to be based on comparative advantage in the pursuit

of strategic objectives. In that regard, the emerging strategic partnership between the African Union and the United Nations in the areas of peace and security need to be reinforced, based on the creative reading of the provisions of Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations, to allow the African Union and its regional mechanisms to fully play their role as integral components of collective security.

Lastly, the African Union recognizes the often ignored drivers of conflict, such as gender-based violence and gender inequality. It therefore reaffirms its strong commitment to focus on preventive strategies, as inscribed in the African Union Charter, which reinforce the empowerment of women and tackle the sources of instability but inflict pain and violence on our continent.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank Mr. António for his briefing.

I shall now give the floor to those Council members who wish to make statements.

Mr. Rycroft (United Kingdom): I thank Ambassador Téte António and, above all, the Deputy Secretary-General for sharing their analyses of their important visit to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and to northern Nigeria.

May I also commend the work of UN-Women and of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, who also took part in the visit. Together, they have really brought home to us the horrific, disproportionate impact that both those crises have on civilians and in particular, on women and girls. It is an impact that the Council knows only too well, following our visit to the Lake Chad region in March, but I am sure that none of us who were on that visit will forget the stories of anguish that we heard then. We heard so many of them from mothers or daughters who had lost everything — their children, families, homes and hope — all to Boko Haram.

Sadly, it seems that those stories are still being told. Despite the efforts of the United Nations, the African Union and Governments of the region, the suffering continues, with over 2 million people still displaced in the Lake Chad region — over 96 per cent of them because of the insurgency. Similar stories can also be heard loudly and clearly in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which now has the highest displaced population in Africa. The reports emanating from the Kasai regions should make us all sick to our stomachs. They speak of mass graves, brutal killing and maiming, including of women and children. They tell of rampant sexual violence. Over 1,000 cases have been responded to since the crisis began last year, with the actual number of cases likely to be far higher.

That has sparked a crisis that has left 400,000 children at risk of severe acute malnutrition. Those two situations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and northern Nigeria are different in many ways, and yet they are product of the same vicious cycle. It is a cycle of instability — one that breeds violence and leads to a breakdown of law and order. It is a cycle that allows groups like Boko Haram to flourish and carry out those most heinous crimes.

Put simply, we need to break the cycle. By we, I mean all of us, including the Security Council, but responsibility must fall first and foremost to the Governments affected. The Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Government of Nigeria have a duty to restore stability because instability fuels crises. As they do so, they must respect human rights and international humanitarian law. They cannot be part of the problem if they want to be part of the solution.

That means that Governments must protect civilians as they restore stability. It means that they must act on allegations of human rights abuses, including sexual violence, irrespective of whether they are allegations against their own forces or any other group and that includes United Nations peacekeepers too. It means Governments holding to account those who have committed such crimes, showing that there can be no impunity or escape and that the rule of law applies to everyone.

We need to help them in that effort. That is why the United Kingdom, together with our United Nations and non-governmental organization partners, are supporting the Nigerian Government to re-establish basic social services to areas that they have stabilized. It is why we pledged $6 million to support to humanitarian response in the Kasais, and why we support the Human Rights Council's unanimous decision to deploy a team of experts to look into the situation there. It is why we provide training to the Nigerian armed forces and to African peacekeeping contingents on protecting civilians and on preventing sexual and gender-based violence. And it is why the United Kingdom is funding

legal assistance in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to help the survivors of those crimes.

But ultimately, those are all comparatively short-term actions. To end the crises that afflict so many women and girls disproportionately in both the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Nigeria, we need to see long-term progress on the women and peace and security agenda. At its heart, that means women's equality in all aspects of politics, Government and society. It is unacceptable that women continue to be so poorly represented in formal governance and peace processes when, time after time, studies show that women's participation in such processes aids their ultimate success.

In Nigeria, for instance, women's participation in the House of Representatives and the Senate has fallen since 2011. It now stands at around 5 per cent. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, only two women were involved in discussions to reach a political agreement during the crisis last year. Had just one more woman been involved, they would have matched the total number of women sitting around this table representing the member States of the Security Council. Whether in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in Nigeria or, indeed, in the Security Council, let us all advocate for the full active participation of women. Women have spent too long enduring and surviving these crises. It is long past time for them to play their fullest part in solving them.

Mr. Seck (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): I would like to begin by thanking the Egyptian delegation for having convened today's briefing on the goals and outcome of the high-level joint African Union-United Nations solidarity mission to the Federal Republic of Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo from 19 to 27 July.

I commend the participation of the Deputy Secretary-General, Ms. Amina Mohammed; Ambassador Téte António, Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations; and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict and the Executive Director of UN-Women, whom we welcome. I thank the Deputy Secretary-General and Ambassador Téte António for the quality of their respective briefings, which were very comprehensive and rich.

The African Union and the United Nations had every reason to conduct a joint visit to these two large African countries — which have quite rightly been qualified as giants of the continent, given their size, demography, economic weight, rich cultural diversity and extraordinary biodiversity — in order to promote truly sustainable and inclusive development. Indeed, looking at the situation of the countries visited, and many other cases, we are convinced that the women and peace and security approach is one very useful method out of several used to respond to crises and to build the resilience of the States and the communities in question when faced with a wide array of traditional challenges as well as new threats.

It should be recalled that resolution 1325 (2000) was inspired by Africa. As just mentioned by Ambassador António, the resolution was inspired by Namibia. That is why the configuration of the mission, which combined the extraordinary female leadership of the United Nations with that of the African Union, beyond the purely symbolic, seems to be a fine example of cooperation between the United Nations and the pan-African organization. That cooperation is very useful in order to address adequately the many challenges to peace, security and development in Africa. The Senegalese delegation would therefore like to warmly congratulate the initiators of the mission who, as our briefers explained, was rich in teachings.

We would like it to be just as rich in terms of its impact both on policymakers and on the targets of those policies, namely, the women in those countries and, in particular, those directly affected by the security and humanitarian crises. This is a model of concerted action that constitutes one further step in the implementation of resolution 2242 (2015), adopted by the Council in October 2015, 15 years after the aforementioned pioneering resolution 1325 (2005). The visit highlighted the crises in the countries visited in terms of the place and the role of women in the future of their societies and countries, especially in times of conflict.

My delegation would like to note with satisfaction, in view of the content of this high-level mission, the desire to align and create consistency on a practical level among the Sustainable Development Goals and the African Union Agenda 2063 and its Peace and Security Architecture.

Finally, a great deal of information was gathered on the ground, and positive interactions were enjoyed by the joint mission, both in Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in particular with the highest

authorities of those countries, as well as with women victims of conflict and crises, such as the high school students of Chibok. We remain convinced that the information and the interactions will strengthen the work of the networks set up to better address the issue of women and peace and security at all levels.

Senegal echoes the appeal of the Deputy Secretary-General for the increased mobilization of the international community in favour of these two countries, the central African subregion, and Africa in general. Next month, the Security Council and the Peace and Security Council of the African Union will hold in Addis Ababa their eleventh annual consultations. I see no better opportunity to follow up on the visit.

Mr. Llorentty Solíz (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Plurinational State of Bolivia thanks the Egyptian presidency for convening and organizing this meeting. We also welcome the presence among us of Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed and the Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations, Ambassador Teté António.

Bolivia should like to acknowledge in particular the Deputy Secretary-General, not only for the briefing, but also for realizing the initiative to carry out the first joint United Nations-African Union high-level visit focused on the importance of women's participation in the processes of peace, security and development, in addition to the fight against sexual violence in armed conflict. We believe that this trip can become a model and that visits of this nature can take place not only in Africa, but in other regions of the world. Both are necessary to raise societal awareness of the role that women should play in all areas — economic, political and social — with respect to international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

Concerning sexual violence in conflict, Bolivia is of the view that this crime is one of the most inhuman acts, the emotional and physical consequences of which permanently affect the personal development of the survivors. The international community now needs to address this problem, pooling its efforts to implement measures at the national, regional and international levels. We believe that sexual violence in conflict represents a threat to international peace and security. That is why the Security Council decided to adopt the implementation of the agenda on women and peace and security.

In that connection, we highlight United Nations efforts to implement Security Council resolutions, in particular resolution 2242 (2015), and the relevant General Assembly resolutions in order to integrate the gender perspective effectively. However, and in spite of those efforts, women's participation remains marginal. The Security Council alone has adopted eight resolutions related to sexual violence against women and the strong correlation between peace processes and the participation of women therein. We must continue to work to ensure that the situation of women in conflict is treated as a matter of priority within the agenda of the Security Council. Seventeen years ago, resolution 1325 (2000), highlighted the crucial link between gender equality and international peace and security.

Sexual violence in conflict does not distinguish between genders; however, it does mostly affect women and girls, who are victims of rape, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, forced marriage, forced sterilization and other forms of violence. One example is the case of Nigeria, where since 2014, Boko Haram, a violent extremist group, has kidnapped approximately 7,000 women and girls who are victims of these crimes, leaving deep wounds in the female population of that country.

Terrorist groups also use sexual violence not only as a weapon of war, but also as a means of financing their activities. It is therefore necessary to fight attempts to legitimize illicit profits derived from sexual exploitation and forced prostitution that have entered the global financial system through money laundering and so-called tax havens, which tend to reduce or eliminate controls in place in various areas of investment. In this context, it is necessary to investigate whether these terrorist groups gain access to these so-called tax havens.

Similarly, we are concerned at the ongoing deterioration of the humanitarian situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. According to data from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, in the Kasai region, one of the most affected by violence, more than 500 boys and girls have been recruited into armed groups. There have been more than 600 cases of sexual violence since August 2016, and there are numerous cases of victims of human trafficking and smuggling, summary executions, arbitrary detentions and arrests. Furthermore, according to UNICEF data, in the Kasai region, violent clashes between the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the

Kamuina Nsapu militia have had devastating effects on children.

In addition to the foregoing, one of the most difficult consequences of sexual violence that survivors have to overcome is the stigma they and their children face, together with the related discrimination and the socioeconomic marginalization that relegates them to second-class status. Accordingly, the international community should contribute to lending support to national initiatives aimed at reintegrating the survivors of these traumas and their children into society, so that they can fully enjoy their rights.

To this end, Bolivia supports the Secretary-General's four-pronged strategy to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse and respond to existing cases, including giving priority to victims and listening to their needs and experiences; putting an end to the impunity that triggers stigmatization; promoting the participation of civil society and foreign partners; and improving strategic communication in order to raise awareness. In addition, measures needed to prevent armed conflicts and promote the participation of women in peace, security and development processes should be implemented.

We acknowledge that there remain structural challenges, such as the patriarchal mindset of appropriation and ownership of women's bodies, including control over their sexuality and even their reproductive capacity. Violence against women is the expression of the patriarchal system rooted in society, which is made even more radical when women and girls are used, among other things, as military shields.

Bolivia emphasizes the need to strengthen cooperation between the United Nations, the African Union and other regional organizations in the fight against sexual violence in conflict. Close communication between the Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Special Envoy of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission is vital if we are to implement the women and peace and security agenda on the African continent and thereby strengthen existing mechanisms.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as well as the African Union's 2063 Agenda, hold gender equality and women's empowerment among their most important goals. Without women taking their full place as key actors, it will be impossible to make progress in terms of social development. Gender equality is not just a human right, but it also provides a basis for achieving sustainable peace and development.

In our experience, the Bolivian experience, the sovereign administration of natural resources is paramount for the socioeconomic development of a State. Indeed, it is through it, together with proper leadership and political will, that a structural shift can be made in the key areas of development.

Since the promulgation of its new political State Constitution in 2009, Bolivia has drawn up and implemented legislation designed to build a fair society with equal opportunities for women, emphasizing their political empowerment by establishing parity and alternation in the lists of candidates for representative office, making ours the country with the second-highest number of female parliamentarians in the world. In the economic sphere, the law on the community renewal of agrarian reform ensures the right of women to own land.

In conclusion, Bolivia proposes drawing up, in addition to the Secretary-General's four-point plan, a pact that guarantees the empowerment and inclusion of women in the light of Goal 5 of the 2030 Agenda, which calls for the Security Council and other United Nations entities in the United Nations system to address this issue. This pact should ensure, first, the political empowerment of women through laws that guarantee parity and alternation in elected representation posts. Secondly, it should ensure and promote women's participation in peace processes by carving out an active role for them in prevention, mediation and dialogue in order to find solutions on an equal footing. Thirdly, in this pact, we should ensure that women are engaged in post-conflict reconstruction through their economic, social and cultural reintegration. Fourthly, the economic empowerment of women should be ensured through laws and public policies that allow, inter alia, for access to land ownership and credit to facilitate their attainment of economic independence. Of course, all peace and development processes must include women if we truly want a fair, stable and lasting peace.

Ms. Sison (United States of America): I wish to thank Ambassador Téte António and, in particular, Deputy Secretary-General Mohammed, for their briefings on the tremendous challenges that women continue to face in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in the Lake Chad Basin. We applaud this inaugural joint effort Deputy Secretary-General has launched

The Nigerian Government has launched the Safe Schools initiative, aimed at providing education and piloting safe education facilities in the conflict-affected areas of the north-east. Nigeria also endorsed the Safe Schools Declaration, by which it committed to implementing the Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict.

Nigeria's laws and policies on the promotion and protection of the rights of children reflect our commitment to the relevant international instruments to which we are signatory. The Government is operating an enabling environment that provides women and children with equal opportunities, protects their rights and facilitates their full participation in society. A national child policy is in place to further facilitate the actualization of the rights enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Child's Rights Act.

The Child Rights Act, which was signed into law in 2003, prohibits all physical and mental abuse of children. The Government was at the vanguard of supporting and ratifying the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa. Article 6 of the Charter sets the minimum age for marriage at 18. The Government has also adopted a national action plan to monitor compliance with international human rights obligations. Within this framework, a Human Rights Commissioner has been appointed as Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Children. The mandate for this position is to monitor and assemble data on child rights abuse.

The Government has also set up agencies with a mandate to protecting children. The National Human Rights Commission, established in 1995 to protect and enforce human rights in general, is very active in the fight against child abuse. The National Agency for the. Prohibition of Traffic in Persons works in partnership with United Nations agencies and other Government institutions at both the federal and state levels to carry out the fight against trafficking in persons, prevent trafficking, rehabilitate trafficked persons and prosecute offenders, with particular emphasis on trafficking of the girl child.

A national priority agenda for vulnerable children 2013-2020 has been developed as a strategic framework to guide the multisectoral operationalization of the Vision 20:20:20 strategies and objectives of ensuring the protection of the most vulnerable children in Nigeria. Funding has been made available to bolster awareness of the public. The Government has also created the Children's Parliament, as well as public holidays such as Children's Day and Day of the African Child. Several non-governmental organizations also complement the efforts of the Government in that regard.

The Federal Government has also signed an agreement with the International Labour Organization and the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour to establish shelter centres to rehabilitate trafficked children and reunite them with their families. In addition, the Government recently adopted a child labour policy aimed at protecting children against all kinds of abuse in the workplace and all forms of labour that militate against the proper development of the child. This is in line with our approach to fighting human trafficking, which combines law enforcement with policies aimed at the prevention of trafficking and the protection of victims.

The Buhari plan is the current Administration's comprehensive recovery blueprint, which integrates all actors and actions into a coordinated set of activities expected to create traction for the rapid recovery of the north-east from the wreckage caused by the Boko Haram insurgency.

Nigeria is aware of the challenges in the fight to protect children and acknowledges that there is still work to be done. The Government is firmly committed to the task of protecting its women and children, and counts on the continued support of the United Nations in this regard. The Government will uphold all its obligations under relevant international instruments pertaining to international humanitarian law.

If there were any doubt about our commitment to the protection of human rights, the Government, it should now be put to rest. On 4 August, the Government established the National Judicial Commission to look into human rights abuses committed by military personnel in the country. Its mandate is to, among other things, scrutinize the compliance of the armed forces with human rights obligations and rules of engagement, especially in local conflict and insurgency situations; to investigate alleged acts of violation of international humanitarian and human rights law under the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria of 1999, the Geneva Convention Act, the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and other relevant laws by the Nigerian security agenies; and to look at factors that might be hindering the quick resolution of local

effort in the region, including the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali and Operation Barkhane.

However, as the latest developments demonstrate, the situations in Mali and Burkina Faso continue to deteriorate. In Mali, since the signing of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in 2015, the country's stability has certainly improved, but for several months the efforts seem to have collapsed. We encourage the Government, which is responsible for ensuring stability in the country, to seek alternative solutions based on lessons learned from efforts made to date. In Burkina Faso, there was yet another terrorist attack, which claimed the lives of many innocent civilians in an attempt to destabilize the country and the region.

Uruguay stresses the importance of the G-5 Sahel joint force in implementing measures to mitigate the impact of military operations on the civilian population, particularly women and children. It is also essential to train troops on protecting the most vulnerable populations — women and children.

Moreover, the implementation of the strategies of the joint force of the G-5 Sahel should incorporate a gender perspective and recognize women's important role in conflict prevention, conflict resolution and peacebuilding. Additionally, the countries of the region have a fundamental responsibility to protect and assist children who have been released by terrorist organizations and organized transnational criminal groups. Children who have been traumatized by being torn from their families and communities, and who have been robbed of their childhood and forced to live and act in certain ways, often in the most abject conditions, should be considered victims rather than perpetrators. It is therefore necessary to work proactively to ensure their effective reintegration into society.

In conclusion, I would like to encourage the G-5 Sahel countries and the international community to continue fostering stability in the region, which is the only way to achieve lasting results.

Ms. Schoulgin-Nyoni (Sweden): I thank Assistant Secretary-General Wane for his briefing.

Please allow me to begin by expressing my deepest condolences to the families and friends of the victims of Sunday night's atrocious terrorist attack in central Ouagadougou. Let me also express my condolences for the loss of a peacekeeper, alongside a Malian soldier, in Douentza yesterday, and for the loss of lives of employees of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and the Malian gendarmerie during the attack in Timbuktu yesterday. Our thoughts go out to the families of the victims and we hope for the speedy recovery of those injured.

Those tragedies and heinous attacks are stark reminders of the challenges facing the Sahel countries. In that regard, I commend the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) countries' collective efforts to move towards the full operationalization of the G-5 Sahel joint force. In order to respond to those challenges and the regional implications of terrorism, we need regional, multidimensional and coordinated solutions. The G-5 Sahel joint force is one part of that response. A sustainable solution will, however, also require continued and increased attention to the root causes of instability. We must ensure that the young women and men of the Sahel envision a future without having to migrate or join criminal or extremist networks.

I agree with colleagues who state that while the primary responsibility for the operationalization of the force lies with the States members of the G-5 Sahel, the support of the international community and the United Nations is needed on the basis of a clearly defined catalogue of capability gaps and needs. Let me therefore also highlight some issues that we believe remain to be clarified, in order to ensure the full efficiency and success of the G-5 Sahel joint force.

First of all, an overarching political framework and a coherent strategy should guide the force's activities. Command and control structures must also be well defined. Similarly, and considering the amount of stakeholders and security actors in the Sahel, it is crucial to ensure coordination both on the ground — not least with MINUSMA and European Union capacity-building missions in the region — and on a political level. Embedment within the African Union peace and security architecture is desirable, as is consideration of other regional initiatives.

Secondly, while the general concept of operations of the joint force includes references to human rights, protection of civilians with particular attention to women and children, gender, respect for international humanitarian law and the right of pursuit across borders, we welcome and Mr. Wane's view that those aspects must be further developed and clarified, not

with the African Union to draw needed attention and renewed international impetus to advancing women's roles in peace and security and development processes worldwide. The Security Council needs to do a better job understanding the threats that women face in conflict zones as well as acknowledging that we can better help countries recover from conflict by promoting the full inclusion of women in peace processes.

The use of sexual violence in conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has a long history, and the recent violence in the Kasai regions is the latest horrific chapter. The United Nations has received more than 600 reports of sexual violence in the Kasais since August, including 186 reports of conflict-related sexual violence by certain units of the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We have heard reports of atrocities against civilians including executions of children. Civilians are being mutilated, burned alive and hacked to death, and the violence is still getting worse. The violence and ongoing and egregious abuses have forced more than 1.3 million people to flee their homes in search of safety.

It is important that the Deputy Secretary-General has raised these issues with us today. Far too many victims are suffering with too little attention paid to their plight. The Security Council needs to act now to stop this violence, including by demanding that Government forces cease violations and hold accountable those who commit sexual violence and other atrocities.

In Nigeria, Boko Haram has ravaged the north-eastern regions of the country, kidnapping scores of women and children, subjecting them to slavery and brainwashing these victims to carry out still more attacks. In March of this year, I had the opportunity with other Council members to visit the Lake Chad Basin and to meet with the displaced in Maiduguri in north-eastern Nigeria. The women there spoke movingly of what they had endured at the hands of Boko Haram. There were accounts of kidnappings and forced marriage and of gender-based and sexual exploitation perpetrated by Boko Haram and other armed groups. And the victims, including women and girls, continue to suffer enormously from stigmatization and a lack of psychosocial support. These abuses are sickening; they should shock us.

Seven years of violence in north-eastern Nigeria have taken the lives of more than 15,000, forced more than 2 million from their homes, and left more than 4.7 million dependent on food aid and at risk of famine in many areas. As the Deputy Security-General has reported, women and girls who have been liberated from the traumas they faced under Boko Haram sometimes return home to their villages only to face new trauma. This new reality comes in the form of exclusion and stigmatization from communities that they once called home. After capture by Boko Haram, many of these women and girls cannot go home — even once they have been freed. These women and girls, and, in many cases, the children born while they were in Boko Haram's custody, face homelessness and despair, and these challenges may well linger for generations. The United States will continue its work with the Government of Nigeria to root out Boko Haram and support stabilization in the north-east.

The threat posed by Boko Haram and affiliates of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham in West Africa remains grave, but, as we work to make progress in the conflict, it also remains essential that Nigeria continue to work to win the peace. That will require strengthening Government institutions, in particular local Governments and regions impacted by the conflict, supporting economic investment and development and providing services to citizens in establishing effective and regionally coordinated disarmament, demobilization, deradicalization and reintegration programmes.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Lake Chad basin are unfortunately just two examples of a much broader pattern characteristic of the conflicts on the Security Council's agenda. In an increasing number of places, when War or conflict breaks out, women are among the first to become victims of unconscionable abuse. Fighters often seek degrading the dignity of women and girls as a central element of their strategy for repressing the populations that they target. We hope that the trip and briefing today by the Deputy Secretary-General will help increase awareness of that dire and widespread problem.

The United States will remain strongly supportive of policies that aim to protect women who are the victims of conflict and that promote the role of women as peacemakers when violence ends. One suspects that many of the intractable conflicts on the Council's agenda would perhaps be a little less intractable if more women were at the table. The United States will work to recognize the unique contributions that women make and to draw attention to their plight when they

conflict and offer solutions on how to prevent human rights violations in times of conflict in the future.

Nigeria commends the work of all the United Nations agencies — including the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in Nigeria, the United Nations Development Programme, UN-Women, UNICEF, and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, as well as international donors — that are actively working with Nigeria to ensure the restoration of peace, security and development in the north-east. However, Nigeria also believes that better the coordination and coherence of the work of these United Nations agencies in the region would enhance efficiency in the work being done in Nigeria. That would achieve better results and avoid situations where agencies work at cross-purposes.

As we speak, all the service chiefs are in the north-east. The number of military and paramilitary personnel have been increased in the internally displaced persons camps and in the north-east. We recommit to ensuring that women and children enjoy full rights, and that those who have perpetrated sexual violence are dealt with in accordance with our national laws and international obligations.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to the Deputy Secretary-General to respond to the comments and questions raised.

The Deputy Secretary-General: I want to reiterate my deep appreciation to the Council for giving us this opportunity to speak on this issue. It is a critical one that strikes at the core of human rights, which are women's rights. It is inhumane and strips women of their dignity. It is a scar for life and often visits families beyond that one person, and certainly many children that are born as a result.

In answering the question that was put forward by the representative of France, this trip in and of itself was really also a response to what we felt was putting life into the just texts that the Council has adopted in resolutions 1325 (2000) and 2242 (2015), but really trying to explain better what it is that we would be looking at in countries where we want to see prevention and sustaining peace a reality and how to make the investments of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development a reality.

I think that in this trip it was very clear that both Sustainable Development Goals 16 and 17 were critical — that without strong institutions we cannot make the demands of those aspirations that we have for the Agenda. It is therefore important that we begin to think of what sort of investments are going to be needed up front if we are to really see many national Governments responding to closing the gap between the reality and the aspirations. I think we got keen insights into that issue, just as we also did with respect to partnerships, making many frameworks we have between the United Nations and other institutions a reality.

I think in that regard we were trying to walk the talk and move very quickly into seeing how, with the African Union, we could change the narrative in making implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 a reality. What better entry point is there for looking at the most vulnerable populations? Which are also the largest populations? We talk about 50 per cent of our populations, 50 per cent of our assets that need investments, need protecting and need their human rights. It was wonderful to get the response that we got.

This trip was the supposed to also include a trip to South Sudan. We were not able to go there due to unforeseen circumstances, but with this response we will now be able to look not only at the African region but at other regions as well, in order to draw together these issues, give a comprehensive view and bring to everyone's continuous notice the complexities and different ranges of context, not just in the conflicts that we have seen in Africa but also across other regions.

It is critical when we do make these trips, as we felt very strongly in both cases, that what we see and what we come back with needs follow-up. We lose integrity when we return from these trips and we cannot follow up with the promises and the commitments that were made. In particular, I would like to thank both Governments.

In Nigeria, we heard from young girls that they faced a challenge. While they were appreciative of the fact that they had a camp, security and a home, they were totally devastated by the daily situation of having to exchange sex for food. This fact made a very powerful impression on us. How could we let that girl go back? Well, fortunately for us, one of the recommendations we made was, very simply, to change the policy. The people dealing with the distribution of food in camps should be women, not men. One should start with that change, and in the course of our interactions with the Nigerian Government we were able to get it agreed to.

least in the light of the important role of women in peacebuilding, as highlighted in resolution 2359 (2017). We therefore ask for further details on how the joint force aims to take those perspectives into account in the implementation of its mandate.

Lastly, and related, the civilian component is paramount to the success of the joint force. We would ask actors to clarify its structure, size and function as a matter of urgency.

Let me conclude by reiterating that the challenges of the Sahel concern all of us and require multidimensional and coordinated investments in both security and development throughout the region. Sweden remains fully committed to supporting those efforts.

Mr. Llorentty Solíz (Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Bolivia expresses its deepest condolences to the people and the Government of Burkina Faso for the tragic events last Sunday, We extend our condolences to France, Turkey, the Niger, Kuwait and Ethiopia, which lost countrymen in the attack.

We likewise deplore the attack on the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali that took place yesterday in Mali, which resulted in the death of a Togolese humanitarian worker. Bolivia strongly condemns all terrorist acts as criminal and unjustifiable, regardless of their motivation, committed wherever, whenever and by whomsoever. We reaffirm the need for all States to fight it, pursuant the Charter of United Nations and other obligations under international law.

We welcome Assistant Secretary-General Wane's briefing on peace operations and the situation in the Sahel and thank the Egyptian presidency for having convened this session on such an important sub-region of the African continent. Bolivia highlights the commendable efforts of the regional bodies led by the Peace and Security Council of the African Union. We are confident that the strategic concept of the joint force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) and the deployment of the forces in order to address the impact of terrorism and transnational organized crime through multidimensional operations in border areas is a suitable tool that complements the work of United Nations peacekeeping forces in the region. We commend the efforts of Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and the Niger in the deployment and operationalization of their forces in the field. We believe that it is the obligation of the Council to actively contribute to this initiative, which benefits the stabilization process in the region.

We would also highlight the efforts of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel in implementing the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel, which is in line with the African Union's Nouakchott Process on the enhancement of security cooperation and the operationalization of the African Peace and Security Architecture in the Sahelo-Saharan region. The G-5 Sahel is the clearest example of the contribution of African countries to strengthening security capacities in the region.

Currently, the Sahel poses major challenges both for local Governments and for the international community. The issues of peace, security and development, the exploitation of natural resources and climate change are determining factors that seriously endanger the institutional structure of the countries of the area and, consequently, their population, which counts some 150 million inhabitants.

One of the countries of the Sahel, Mali — which, after a peaceful transfer of power in 2002, maintained political stability and economic growth, and is a country rich in history and natural resources — is now suffering from a volatile and complex situation that includes asymmetrical threats that endanger the political peace process, the civilian population and members of the United Nations peacekeeping mission. Mali not only faces the consequences of armed group violence, but must also repel the threat of terrorist groups such as Al-Qaida, Ansar Eddine and Jama'at Nusrat, as well as the threat of transnational delinquency and organized crime, which rely on the crimes of trafficking in persons and migrants, and drug and arms trafficking networks, among others.

Furthermore, according to the latest report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali (S/2017/478), published in June, the humanitarian situation in central and northern Mali has continued to deteriorate. A total of 3.8 million people are at risk of food insecurity as a result of drought and persistent violence. Moreover, about 1.2 million people have been identified as having limited access to water and basic services. Insecurity has led to an increase in the number of displaced persons in the latest reporting period of the Secretary-General, from approximately 45,000 to 59,000 people.

It is also important to analyse the causes of the conflict, which have influenced the volatile security

are the victims of conflict. Moreover, the United States remains committed to implementing the United States national action plan on women, peace and security — a plan born out of resolution 1325 (2000).

We hope that today's meeting will help push the members of the Council to take action in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Lake Chad basin and in other conflicts in which women and girls are at grave risk. The Deputy Secretary-General has brought those issues to our and the world's attention today. Our responsibility now as members of the Security Council is to follow up this briefing with consequences for those who perpetrate the abuses. The United States will continue to lead the way in pressing for this much needed accountability.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are grateful to Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed and Permanent Observer of the African Union, Mr. Téte António, for their useful and detailed briefings. We would also like to commend the Executive Director of UN-Women, Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Pramila Patten.

Preventing and resolving conflicts is a necessary precondition for ensuring stability and sustainable development and for promoting and protecting human rights. We support the work of the African Union and subregional bodies in their roles regarding conflict prevention and resolution, since it is precisely those organizations that have the best information concerning the situation on the ground and the possibilities for peaceful settlement. We also favour strengthening cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union.

The issue of women and peace and security is an integral part of the overall peace process and post-conflict peacebuilding. The African Union five-year Gender, Peace and Security Programme 2015-2020 is a clear example of a regional initiative to bolster women's participation in peace processes. It is also important to ensure that such work is not merely declamatory but leads to specific results in connection with improving women and girls' status in conflict and post-conflict societies.

We are concerned about ongoing reports of sexual violence perpetrated by terrorist groups, such as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham and Boko Haram. We categorically condemn that criminal practice used by terrorists. We urge States to cooperate actively in combating the shadow economy of terrorists who benefit financially from human trafficking, sexual slavery and forced prostitution. We support the work of the multinational armed forces comprised of African troops to combat Boko Haram.

We concur with our colleagues' concerns that the deteriorating situation in the Congolese provinces of Kasai is harming women and children. We are concerned about the escalating confrontation between the authorities and tribal armed militias in those provinces. The Government and the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo need to take additional measures to diffuse the situation. We would, however, like to warn against indiscriminately blaming what is happening on the Congolese troops and police for their allegedly disproportionate use of force. Members of the Kamwina Nsapu militia are also to blame. They are attacking Government officials, schools and polling stations and recruiting child soldiers. That cannot justify human rights violations by law enforcement agencies. We nonetheless need to wait for the outcome of the official investigation by the authorities.

We believe that the root causes of that problem should be addressed by assisting the Congolese authorities to reform their security sector so as to ensure that law enforcement agents uphold human rights. The implementation of the human rights due diligence policy needs to be carried out more cautiously, as it does not allow for the building of the capacity of law enforcement agencies, but as a consequence the military and political situation is failing to improve and there seems to be a vicious cycle. We believe that in order to improve stability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the comprehensive political agreement of 31 December 2016 needs to be upheld by all Congolese parties.

The protection of women in armed conflict from the threat of sexual violence is the primary task of the Governments of States involved in conflicts. We would therefore like to particularly highlight the measures taken by the Government of Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo to combat gender and sexual violence in armed conflict, including combating impunity for that type of crime, deploying female police officers in camps for internally displaced persons and refugee camps, providing medical, psychological and

legal assistance to the survivors of such violence and helping them in social and economic reintegration. We believe that the international community, including the United Nations, faces a significant challenge in helping build national capacity related to combating and preventing violence against women and girls in armed conflict and in assisting national efforts to improve women's participation in conflict prevention and resolution.

Mr. Lambertini (Italy): At the outset, I would like to thank the Egyptian presidency for convening this meeting. It is my special pleasure to welcome Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed. I thank her for her comprehensive briefing and the Permanent Observer of the African Union, Ambassador Téte António, for his very useful contribution.

Italy commends the leadership of the Deputy Secretary-General in having organized the first-ever joint high-level mission with the African Union focused on women's meaningful participation in peace, security and development. We welcome it for three main reasons.

First, the mission has paved the way for a more sustained partnership with the African Union in that area, which we applaud and fully encourage.

Secondly, the initiative aims at tackling a problem for which the United Nations system has always been criticized, namely its work in silos, which has prevented at times an efficient response to crises. In keeping with resolution 2242 (2015), it is vital that we ensure better mainstreaming of the gender perspective in the development, prioritization, coordination and implementation of policies and programmes.

Thirdly, it is important that the United Nations continue in its advocacy and engagement in the field so as to support national authority in ending all current violations and holding all perpetrators accountable.

In this regard, we do not consider it a coincidence that the notorious rebel commander and warlord Ntabo Ntaberi Sheka, who was implicated in the brutal mass rape of at least 387 civilians in Walikale in 2010, decided to surrender to MONUSCO on 26 July while the Mission was in place.

As its visit has demonstrated, advancing gender equality and promoting women's active involvement in the peace process are essential for achieving sustainable development as well as lasting peace and security. As exemplified by the many women whom the Deputy Secretary-General met during her mission, women are a driving force in development, even in the most challenging situations. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for instance, displaced women, despite their dramatic living conditions in refugee camps, have succeeded in organizing some form of access to microcredit, enabling them not only to survive but even to contribute to their communities.

In the meeting with Government officials, the women and peace and security discourse, namely, the revitalization of women's participation and leadership in the peace and security process, was meant to be an entry point for an initial dialogue with the local authorities in both Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Italy welcomes the choice made by the Deputy Secretary-General to visit Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In Nigeria, Boko Haram continues to be a major threat to peace and security, also because of several cases of abduction targeting women, such as the one involving the Chibok girls perpetrated by that terrorist group. During the Security Council mission to the Lake Chad basin in March, of which I had the privilege of being part, we observed the strong engagement of local government in the fight against Boko Haram and other terrorist groups and the attention devoted to promoting the participation of civil society in the fight against radicalization.

It was stressed by the main interlocutors that a crucial role was played in this regard by women's organizations in particular. It is critical for us to keep supporting such efforts.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where I had the privilege of serving my embassy for more than three years, we witnessed one of the worst humanitarian crises in the world, with a total of 3.8 million internally displaced persons. We believe that it is important to pay close attention to the situation. In this context, women and children suffer most of the consequences, both in the eastern provinces and the Grand Kasai region. In the Grand Kasai region in particular, we hope that the Government will conduct a prompt, transparent and independent investigation to establish the facts and the circumstances of the human rights violations and abuses perpetrated over the past months.

In this regard, while recalling that the Congolese authorities have the primary responsibility to protect their people, we hope that the United Nations Joint

Human Rights Office in the Democratic Republic of the Congo will continue to be provided with the resources necessary to assist the Local government in the promotion and protection of human rights.

Allow me to reiterate our deep concern at the current political situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which is one of the causes of the current wave of violence. The swift implementation of the 31 December 2016 agreement is urgent, together with the full implementation of the confidence-building measures agreed in that same agreement. Critical steps must be taken in order to organize elections as soon as possible, with the full and equal participation of women.

To conclude, I would like to once again assure the Deputy Secretary-General and the Council that we will continue to promote and support women's participation and leadership in peace, security and development in Africa and help the continent achieve its Agenda 2063.

Ms. Guadey (Ethiopia): I should like to start by thanking the Deputy Secretary-General for the informative briefing on the first joint African Union-United Nations high-level visit to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and northern Nigeria, in the context of Security Council resolution 2242 (2015), on women and peace and security.

We express our appreciation to the Deputy Secretary-General, Ms. Amina Mohammed, for her efforts and commitment and are gratified to see the partnership between the United Nations and the African Union on the women and peace and security agenda. We also thank Ambassador Téte António for his remarks.

The use of sexual violence as a tactic by Boko Haram terrorists in northern Nigeria has indeed been a matter of serious concern affecting the lives of women and children in a tragic and painful manner. The same victims are also the most affected segments of society in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Internally displaced persons, particularly women and girls in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and northern Nigeria, including those in the camps, continue to face specific protection risks as a result of the situation of vulnerability in which they find themselves and the lack of sustainable solutions to respond thereto.

It is critical that the root causes of the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo be addressed and that the threats posed by Boko Haram in northern Nigeria be effectively handled so as to reduce and eliminate the vulnerabilities of women and girls in conflict-affected areas and prevent further displacement. This would require giving greater attention to the integration of women in the peace and security agenda, particularly in addressing the specific needs and vulnerabilities of women and girls in their protection challenges. Herein lies the value of resolution 1325 (2000) and subsequent relevant Council resolutions on women and peace and security.

We recognize the importance of further strengthening the emergency preparedness and response so as to provide effective protection and achieve sustainable solutions for those internally displaced as a result of the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and northern Nigeria, particularly women and children. It is in this context that we would like to stress the need to strengthen the collaboration between humanitarian and development actors to find sustainable solutions for internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and northern Nigeria, particularly in supporting the provision of basic services, livelihoods and the deployment of opportunities for IDPs as well as the necessary infrastructure, including within the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063.

This would contribute to reducing and eliminating the vulnerabilities of internally displaced women and girls, and reduce their dependence on humanitarian assistance. That is why we appreciate the attention given by the Deputy Secretary-General to the need to link humanitarian and development responses in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and northern Nigeria. We encourage her to persist in this noble endeavour.

Finally, I would like to conclude by affirming the strong commitment of Ethiopia to working with all relevant actors in advancing the women and peace and security agenda and in ensuring the full implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) and relevant subsequent resolutions aimed at enhancing the participation and engagement of women, women leaders and groups in prevention, conflict resolution and post-conflict peacebuilding activities.

Mr. Vitrenko (Ukraine): My delegation appreciates the briefing by Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed as well as the briefing by the Permanent Observer of the African Union. We also look forward to the input by the representative of Nigeria.

We welcome both the conduct of thematic regional visits and the initiative of informing the Council on their outcomes. Such visits and the subsequent briefings provide us with additional insights and a better understanding of situations on the ground, thus better equipping the Council to properly evaluate the problems and challenges in respective countries.

It is praiseworthy that the visit was conducted to raise the profile of gender-related issues in Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The role of women in bringing about positive change after conflict can hardly be overestimated. Women are a driving force behind peacebuilding efforts in their communities. The direction of social and economic development depends on the active participation of women in public life and entrepreneurial activities at both the local and national levels.

The ultimate success or failure of peace agreements and the effectiveness of peacebuilding efforts can quite often be linked to the level of engagement of women in these processes. Having a seat at the negotiating table, shaping an agenda to ensure the inclusion of gender-related issues and playing a role in the implementation of negotiated arrangements — all this is a sine qua non if sustainable peace is to be built in conflict-affected areas. It is therefore highly commendable that in its meetings with high-level officials from Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the joint delegation of the United Nations and the African Union stressed the importance of women's participation in peace and security processes, as well as in elections and other political activities. Concrete and tangible follow-up is needed in order to promote women's rights.

In many places in Africa, conflicts and crises are accompanied by a devastating surge in violence directed at women and girls. The persistent use of sexual violence as a weapon of war in African conflicts has left lasting scars on communities and societies. In that regard, one of the stated objectives of the visit — to make the consequences of conflict-related sexual violence against women and girls more visible — is extremely timely. The meetings and conversations with the Chibok girls in Nigeria and displaced residents in North Kivu in the Democratic Republic of the Congo must have been very difficult, given the suffering that many of them have endured.

Discussing sexual violence, sexual slavery, forced marriage and physical and psychological abuse can be devastating. But such conversations are essential if we want to understand how we can support survivors of conflict-related sexual violence. There can be no hiding from the fact that these survivors are revictimized through public shaming and stigmatization way too often. Much more must be done if they are to achieve proper socioeconomic reintegration. Another equally important aspect is ensuring accountability for committing crimes of sexual violence, not only to meet demands for justice, but to help societies break cycles of conflict. The perpetrators of sexual violence must be brought to account without regard for their affiliation and rank.

The pervasive nature of this horrible scourge makes it imperative for us, the international community, to double down on our efforts to end it. Designing prevention policies, ensuring accountability for the perpetrators and providing adequate support and rehabilitation for their victims should be part and parcel of any conflict resolution endeavour.

Mr. Bermúdez (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to thank Ms. Amina Mohammed, the Deputy Secretary-General, for her thorough briefing on the joint visit of the United Nations and the African Union to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Nigeria a few weeks ago. I would also like to thank Ambassador Téte António, Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations. It goes without saying that the African Union is a fundamental partnership of the United Nations where peace and security are concerned.

I would like to begin by expressing Uruguay's full support for the initiative to make the joint visit, emphasizing the participation of senior United Nations officials, including the Deputy Secretary-General, the Executive Director of UN-Women and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict. In our view, this kind of initiative is extremely useful for giving us a deeper understanding of the situation of women in armed conflict and helps to turn a spotlight on this vulnerable group, which nonetheless has a key role to play in the peaceful resolution of conflicts.

We also believe that it can be a good complement to the efforts of the Security Council's Informal Experts Group on Women, Peace and Security, which my delegation, jointly with the delegation of Sweden, has the honour to chair. As members know, the Group was established in accordance with resolution 2242

(2015), which the Council adopted in October 2015. In the 18 months of its existence it has held 12 meetings to discuss the situation of women in Mali, Iraq, the Central African Republic, Afghanistan, Yemen and the Lake Chad basin. The information and analysis it has produced has also been used by various stakeholders in the effort to advance the agenda on women and peace and security, from donors and policymakers to defenders and agents for women's rights on the ground.

I would like to comment briefly on the particular cases of Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the countries that were the object of the visit. We are very concerned about the systematic use in Nigeria of sexual violence as a tactic of terrorism, such as in the terrorist group Boko Haram's abduction and sexual exploitation of thousands of women and girls and the increasing use of women as suicide bombers. However, there is a dearth of information on the impact of gender on such complex humanitarian crises, as well as on the role that women's participation and leadership and gender-equality issues have to play in peacebuilding efforts, for example in the fight against violent extremism, the restoration of State authority and the protection of human rights.

In that regard, my delegation has identified several key areas requiring special attention, such as transborder judicial cooperation; assistance in dealing with the stigmatization of victims and their children; the provision of basic services in areas such as education and sexual and reproductive health, as essential components of the humanitarian response; and ensuring that national and regional strategies identify survivors of sexual violence as victims of terrorism so that they can receive appropriate aid.

During the Security Council's visit in March to the countries of the Lake Chad basin, we had the opportunity to hear valuable testimony by Nigerian women, from members of Parliament to activists and the internally displaced, in our meetings in Abuja and Maiduguri. All of them shared their expectations, aspirations and frustrations, their initiatives and plans. Above all, we were struck by the clarity of their message, which was their simple desire to have the opportunity to freely exercise their rights and make decisive contributions to their country's social and political development.

With regard to the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Uruguay supports every effort to guarantee women's participation in supporting the country's political process and organizing and holding elections. It should be emphasized that the Security Council has tasked the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo with supporting the Government and the United Nations country team in ensuring women's representation and participation in political processes. We would also like to acknowledge the efforts of the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in this area, particularly by strengthening the Ministry of Women and appointing a special adviser to the President on these issues. We urge it to continue its efforts to ensure women's full and equal participation, especially in the approaching elections.

Mr. Kawamura (Japan): At the outset, I would like to join other members of the Council in thanking Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed and Ambassador Téte António for their valuable briefings and contribution.

The joint mission of the United Nations and the African Union is an important effort to close the gap between the perceptions and the reality of the agenda on women and peace and security that exists between New York and Africa. It is also very significant as the very first joint trip based on the enhanced partnership between the African Union Commission and the United Nations in the area of peace and security. I would therefore like to commend Ms. Mohammed's strong and insightful leadership, which made the visit a great success, and we hope that other, similar, missions will follow. This one made it clear that gender inequality and discrimination against women are among the root causes of conflict in both Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In addition, during the visit to the Lake Chad Basin region in March, members of the Security Council witnessed the important role of women in ensuring peace and security in the region.

The existing conflicts will become further protracted and peace will become more distant and fragile if countries in the region and the international community fail to protect women, who are often the first victims of conflict, and do not ensure their participation in any peacebuilding efforts — as women are bearers of peace.

When it comes to the protection of women, we have to address sexual violence first. Holding perpetrators legally accountable and providing victims with judicial redress are both key elements that require both a legal

structure and its consistent implementation. Japan is proud to be a leading supporter of the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, and specifically the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict, in their effort to provide assistance to Governments in Africa, including the Democratic Republic of the Congo, to ensure the rule of law.

Regarding women's participation, we must enable women to serve as leaders and to aspire to a better future. Women's involvement makes their communities and regions more resilient. It will prevent the infiltration of violent extremist groups and end the negative spiral of poverty and conflict. Japan continues to collaborate with UN-Women to promote women's participation through empowerment, community dialogue and education, focusing on the Sahel region.

In Nigeria, it is encouraging that a group of Chibok girls were released. However, as today's briefing clarified, we must not forget that so many other girls are still held captive and used as weapons of war by terrorist groups. Even after their release, many are still stigmatized and struggle to adapt to the return to their communities. In such cases, we see the need to find comprehensive and long-term approaches to support women in conflict settings.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, we are gratified that perpetrators of rape are being held accountable. The Democratic Republic of the Congo is at an important crossroads in the maintenance and enhancement of peace and stability throughout the elections. The success of the elections hinges on women being actively involved in the decision-making process for their own future. The bitter experiences of both countries should serve as prominent lessons for other conflict-affected nations in Africa and beyond.

In conclusion, let me add that Japan underscores peacebuilding in Africa, including through the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD). This month, Japan will organize the TICAD Ministerial Meeting in Mozambique. This fall, Japan will host the Fourth World Assembly for Women in Tokyo. Japan has emphasized the fundamental nexus between peace and women through these international forums, which I believe embody the same values and message as the joint AU-United Nations Mission.

Mr. Skau (Sweden): Let me begin by thanking the Deputy Secretary-General Ms. Amina Mohammed, and the Permanent Observer of the African Union, Ambassador Téte António, for their valuable briefings this morning and for the leadership that they have shown in women, peace and security. They illustrate how the African Union (AU)-United Nations partnership is growing even stronger, which we very much welcome.

Sweden applauds the initiative for the joint visit. Today we put the women, peace and security agenda front and centre, thus enabling us to properly understand and respond to contemporary security challenges in Nigeria and in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. With resolution 2242 (2015), the Council should be shifting women and gender equality from a peripheral to a core issue in the Security Council. It is also at the heart of Sweden's feminist foreign policy. Combatting root causes is only possible with truly inclusive solutions. It is also why we remain a steadast supporter of UN-Women here today — to ensure that women will be a part of the solution in humanitarian assisstance, development and in peace and security.

Going forward, we would also highlight three priorities. First of all, no sustainable peace can be achieved without effectively linking humanitarian, security, human rights and development efforts. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Sustaining Peace Agenda provides an integrated approach and the master plan for the United Nations in that regard. There can be no humanitarian solution for a political crisis or for long-term development challenges, which was quite evident during our visit to Lake Chad in March where we witnessed first hand how the roots of the conflict run much deeper than the Boko Haram insurgency and how humanitarian assistance and military efforts must be supplemented by development assistance and investments.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sweden supports the Humanitarian Fund from both its humanitarian programme and its development programme to enable humanitarian actors to commit to longer-term engagement and planning. In all that we do, SDG 5 should guide our efforts to make sure that the needs of women and girls are heard and addressed.

Secondly, nothing should be discussed about women without women. Exclusion will always result in inequality and the risk of continued conflict. Women's effective participation and full enjoyment of their human rights is crucial to achieving effective and sustainable peace.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, democratic and peaceful development requires the full implementation of the 31 December 2016 agreement, including women's full participation in the upcoming elections. We are encouraged by local efforts to increase the registration of female voters by, for example, keeping voter registration facilities open on Sundays. It is clear that there is no shortage of women wanting to get involved in Congolese politics, as the umbrella network Rien sans les femmes and other Congolese organizations have vividly demonstrated.

In Nigeria, encouraging local efforts to bring more women into decision-making positions are also under way, which is most welcome since women currently hold less than 6 per cent of the seats in the Parliament and in the courts. Efforts in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in Nigeria to enhance women's participation must be strongly supported by the international community.

Thirdly, we need to strengthen our efforts to combat sexual and gender-based crimes. Violence against women and girls violates their human rights and hinders development. In Nigeria and the Lake Chad region, survivors of sexual and gender-based violence risk stigma of association with insurgents, creating further alienation and isolation which, in turn, risks leading to further socioeconomic frustration and the continuation of the conflict.

It is, of course, the primary responsibility of States to ensure their citizen's safety and dignity and, when violated, accountability, but if States are unwilling or unable to do so, the the international tribunals have an important complementary role to play. The Security Council should also increase its attention to sexual and gender-based violence transgressions in the implementation of its mandates. We would also like to see enhanced attention to sexual and gender-based violence in both thematic and country-specific action when it comes to sanctions. We note that sexual and gender-based violence rarely receives the appropriate attention in United Nations reports.

In conclusion, today's briefing has shown that the women, peace and security agenda needs to be properly addressed when the Security Council debates geographic security challenges. It is now important to ensure the effective follow-up of that important initiative. We look forward to continued discussions in the Council and in the Informal Expert Group on Women, Peace and Security. We need the whole United Nations system to more coherently report and act in line with resolution 2242 (2015) as a part of the follow-up.

That initiative should serve as an inspiration for continued efforts in the field and we encourage similar trips to more countries and regions by United Nations senior leadership, United Nations Women and other relevant actors. Intensified cooperation between the AU and the United Nations related to women, peace and security benefits both organizations because it benefits the strive for peace and prosperity for all, including in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Nigeria. In such efforts, Deputy Secretary-General Mohammed, Ambassador Téte António and all colleagues of the Council can count on the full support of Sweden.

Mr. Sadykov (Kazakhstan): I would like to first thank Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed for her comprehensive briefing on her visit to Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I commend her for her inspirational leadership. I would also like to thanks Ambassador Téte António for his briefing.

Following the 19 April signing of the Joint United Nations-African Union Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security by Secretary-General Guterres and the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Mr. Moussa Faki Mahamat, the second joint United Nations-African Union high-level trip has been significant in focusing on the meaningful participation of women in peace reconciliation, security and development. Such collaborative efforts must not only continue but also be intensified in order to bring the two organizations closer to reaching the targets of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as well as the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the Paris Agreement.

We have to help the region overcome the challenges of eradicating poverty and achieving inclusive and sustainable growth. We must support Africa's steady pursuit of stability and transformative, sustainable development. In that context, the predominant emphasis must be placed on the involvement of woman and youth, as well as their right to human dignity without any form of degradation. Therefore, we encourage strengthening the growing cooperation between the African Union Peace and Security Council, the African Union Commission and the Security Council on gender and youth issues.

The African peace and security architecture and the Silence the Guns by 2020 initiative will bring a new focus on preventive diplomacy, which cannot succeed without the support of the international community. Therefore, in all negotiations, woman and youth, who constitute the majority of the population, must inherit and shape a continent that is free from conflict in all forms, especially violence against women.

We will reach our goals only if we pursue a significant dialogue between the United Nations and the African Union on implementing resolution 2242 (2015). We must also integrate the women and peace and security agenda across all of the Council's activities, including United Nations system programmes, the mandate of the Special Representatives of the Secretary-General on issues related to sexual abuse, as well as work related to women and children in armed conflict and international organizations. Therefore, Kazakhstan will stand by all peace initiatives in Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and elsewhere, which have to incorporate bottom-up and top-down strategies that will bring about transformation.

The situation related to women's rights in the countries that the Deputy Secretary-General visited is extremely fragile and alarming. The situations in Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo have been aggravated by ongoing military actions of armed groups, particularly Boko Haram. Therefore, every effort must be made to ensure the protection of the human rights of women, keeping in mind that the African Union pays special attention to that issue through the recently established Pan African Women's Association, which has been classified as a specialized agency of the African Union.

We must also pay full attention to the dire humanitarian situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which greatly impacts women and girls, who represent the largest number of internally displaced persons and refugees. More than 11 million people have been affected by the humanitarian crisis and more than two-thirds of those 11 million are women and girls. We believe that United Nations agencies, regional organizations and international donors must elaborate a single, comprehensive strategy for the region in order to increase the volume of humanitarian aid and ensure that that aid reaches those in need. We express special appreciation and call for support to be provided to the Government and the people of Uganda, Ethiopia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Tanzania and other countries that have kept their doors open for refugees fleeing from conflict.

It is especially important to further support the African Union's efforts to increase the role of women in strengthening the human rights, security and development nexus, which is essential for stabilizing the overall situation in those countries. We are convinced that long-term stability and sustainable peace can only be achieved by investing in the strong connection between peace, security and development. Therefore, we should address the root causes of the crisis in the region and create better opportunities for education and employment for the next generation. Kazakhstan will always stand for the engagement and contribution of women and youth in all phases of mediation, conflict resolution, post-conflict recovery and long-term development in the joint efforts of the United Nations and the African Union.

We commend the launch of the African Women Leaders Network's, which was initiated on 2 June by the African Union Commission, UN-Women and Germany. The Network seeks to enhance the leadership of women in the transformation of Africa. It focuses on governance, peace and stability.

To conclude, we emphasize the crucial need for development programmes in the aforementioned countries visited by Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed and throughout the whole African continent. The close link between security and development is very important, particularly in the region but also in the world as a whole. That is because the nexus of security and development is actively working on addressing many ongoing issues. We need to support interdependence across the pillars of the United Nations.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Deputy Secretary-General Mohammed and Ambassador António for their briefings.

China welcomes the joint United Nations-African Union visit to Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The visit has a positive significance for the international community in helping it to understand the situation on the ground related to the protection of women and children in relevant countries and regions. It will assist the international community and the United Nations in providing further assistance to relevant countries. China commends the visit.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo and north-eastern Nigeria are faced with varying challenges related to armed conflict and terrorism. Their security situations are complex and grave. Women and children in the region are under the severe threat of sexual violence. The international community should pay greater attention to that issue and comprehensively enhance the protection of vulnerable groups of women and children. I would like to emphasize the following three points.

First, effective measures need to be adopted in order to stabilize the situation and improve security at an early date. The international community should stick to the general direction of settling hotspot issues by political means, and pushing relevant parties to settle their disputes peacefully through dialogue and negotiation. Efforts to combat terrorism and cross-border organized crime should be enhanced in order to cut off the channels for the movement of terrorists, provide necessary protection and humanitarian assistance to vulnerable groups, such as women, and create a secure and stable environment.

Secondly, integrated measures should be used to enhance the capacity-building of the countries in question, which bear the primary responsibility for preventing and combating sexual violence in conflict and for protecting women and children in the country. The international community should respect the sovereignty and will of the countries in question, respect the measures adopted by the Governments in question in the light of their own situations, provide targeted and constructive assistance so as to promote their recovery and development, and enhance their capacity-building in the sectors of security, social services and governance.

Thirdly, synergy arising from cooperation between United Nations agencies and regional organizations should be ensured. The Security Council should fully play its role as the organ bearing primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security; strengthen coordination with the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, the Peacebuilding Commission and UN-Women; and continue to strengthen cooperation with regional and subregional organizations, such as the African Union, in order to coordinate its work related to women, peace and security.

China would like to work with the international community to create a peaceful, secure and stable international environment and make a greater contribution to the swift eradication of sexual violence in conflict and continued advancement in the global cause to empower women.

Mrs. Gueguen (France) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to thank the Deputy Secretary-General for her briefing and initiative to lead the joint United Nations-African Union solidarity mission to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Nigeria and for being personally involved in combating violence against women. It is a daily struggle that calls for commitment and initiative, and France will support all ongoing efforts in that area.

I would also like to commend the efforts and commitment of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict and of the Executive Director of UN-Women, and reiterate our full support.

I also commend the enhanced cooperation between the Security Council and the African Union's Peace and Security Council, which is the focus of today's meeting. In that regard, I would like to thank Ambassador Téte António for his briefing.

Today's meeting is in keeping with the Secretary-General's cross-cutting and comprehensive approach, which we support as it seeks to avoid the silo mentality. We have stated on several occasions that, if we want the United Nations to fulfil the mandate that its Member States and peoples have conferred upon it, we must not address issues relating to peace and security, development and human rights separately. In that regard, we reiterate our support for the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and, in particular, the goals and targets aimed at empowering women and achieving gender equality.

Today's discussions attest in particular to the need for the Council to take at least three issues into more regular and systematic consideration: upholding women's rights, combating violence against women and, above all, encouraging their full participation in the process to achieve sustainable peace. The consensus today is that when we neglect half of humankind, we are sure to see ongoing conflict. That principle must be understood but it is also an urgent call for greater effectiveness. Through detailed accounts by Deputy Secretary-General's and the various missions

undertaken by the Security Council, we are well aware that the plight of many women is closely linked to our attempts to address threats to peace and security.

The next open debate on women and peace and security, which will be held in October, should enable us to offer and adopt concrete and operational solutions in that area and to again examine the specific ways to fully implement the eight resolutions on this agenda that have been adopted by the Council. More must be done to ensure that the rhetoric and commitments so often repeated are translated into action and bring about veritable change so that women are no longer victims, but rather actors in their own right in their respective societies. With regard to sexual abuse and sexual violence, France reiterates its full support for the Secretary-General's strategy and the zero-tolerance policy towards those responsible for perpetrating such abuses.

I shall now turn my attention to the two countries the Deputy Secretary-General visited.

The situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo must capture the Council's full attention. All efforts must be made to ensure that elections are held and that the crucial measures to ease the political tension outlined in the agreement reached on 31 December 2016 are implemented. Women must be fully involved in that process. France is particularly concerned by the violence in the Kasais, which has reached an unsustainable level. The crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo will not be resolved unless justice is served for all those who were victims of violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law and, in particular, women and girls.

We call on the Congolese authorities to cooperate fully with the team of international experts set up by the Human Rights Council in June. Those experts must have unhindered access to the places and people concerned in order to find those responsible for the violence. This is a crucial step so that those responsible for the violence can be brought to justice. We also reiterate our call for the Secretary-General to establish a special board of inquiry to shed light on the death of two experts who were working with the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Finally, we are also concerned about the humanitarian situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which affects women in particular, as Ms. Amina Mohammed just underscored. Long-term solutions must be developed and implemented to address the situation of displaced women.

Given the extent of the crimes committed by Boko Haram against civilians in the Lake Chad basin region, which the Council visited last year and was the subject of discussion surrounding the issue of violence against women, the Council recalled that it was crucial for the security response to the terrorist group to be tethered to a judicial response, and that it be coordinated with neighbouring countries. Combating impunity must also be a priority, along with respect for human rights and international humanitarian law.

The Deputy Secretary-General can count on France's full support for her efforts. I would like to take this opportunity as she is here with us today to inquire about future missions to address the plight of women and the issue of sexual violence.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Egypt.

At the outset, I would like to thank the Deputy Secretary-General, Ms. Amina Mohammed, for her very comprehensive briefing on her recent visit to Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

I would also like to thank the Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations, Mr. Téte António, for his briefing.

I also take this opportunity to laud the cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union in efforts to address conflict-related sexual violence. This is an example of a partnership between the United Nations and a regional organization that should be used as a model to address sexual violence in conflict.

I should now like to highlight the following points.

First, Egypt welcomes the measures taken by the United Nations to address sexual violence in armed conflict, including the increase in the number of women protection advisers on the ground, support to strengthen national institution capacity and the launch of the United Nations Action against Sexual Violence. Egypt also commends the efforts undertaken by the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict and in particular the support it gave to strengthen the capacity of States during armed conflict and post-conflict, in areas such as conducting inquiries and investigations, judicial prosecutions and

criminal trials, dispensing military justice, legislative reforms, the protection of witnesses and reparations.

Secondly, Egypt underscores its unwavering commitment to the United Nations zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse, championed by the Secretary-General. Egypt is committed to working with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, within the framework of the General Assembly, to end to all forms of violence against women. Incidences of such violence committed within peacekeeping operations must be investigated, in line with General Assembly resolution 71/297. We reiterate that it is important for Blue Helmets to be properly trained to handle incidences of sexual violence.

Egypt commends the efforts undertaken by Nigeria to put an end to the sexual violence committed by the terrorist group Boko Haram, in north-eastern Nigeria. Those efforts include rehabilitation and support programmes for victims, programmes for the reintegration of women and girls into their local communities, and for the provision of legal, judicial and medical services to women who are victims of sexual violence.

In that regard, the fight against sexual violence requires synergy and strengthened cooperation between Nigeria and its neighbouring countries. Moreover, the international community, for its part, must continue to lend assistance to Nigeria so that the country can address the challenges linked to cases of sexual violence. In that regard, I would like to underscore that international efforts must be aligned in order to strengthen the capacity of community and religious leaders to raise the awareness of local communities about the importance of putting an end to stereotypes and the stigmatization that affect victims of sexual violence and their children. That stigmatization should be borne by the perpetrators of these crimes and not the victims. We must also prevent terrorism and extremism and win the intellectual war, including the fight against attempts by extremists to make rape permissible in religious terms. In that regard, we would like to welcome the role of Al-Azhar in the fight against erroneous fatwas issued by terrorist organizations pertaining to the situation of women in conflict.

Egypt welcomes the progress that has been made by the authorities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to put an end to sexual violence in conflict. We acknowledge the measures taken in that vein, including the establishment of the post of a special adviser to the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo on tackling sexual violence and the recruitment of child soldiers. We also welcome the efforts to implement the relevant national strategy, including the appointment of women judges and their deployment in the various regions of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. There have been a variety of measures aimed at ensuring that victims have access to justice and also that they receive adequate and appropriate care.

On another note, recent violence has worsened in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in particular in Kasai and other regions. There have been many victims of this worsening violence, including the two United Nations experts of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo, who lost their lives. As a result, the civilian population is faced with growing challenges, including the risk of sexual violence in conflict. This is a risk mostly faced by women and girls. In that respect, I highlight the reports on rapes perpetrated by militia against boys and girls in Kavumu in southern Kivu. Such reports underscore the importance of ramping up our efforts to ensure the implementation of the Democratic Republic of the Congo national strategy to combat sexual violence, with the support of the United Nations, and with a key role to be played by the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We call on all partners to make their contribution to heed the humanitarian appeal of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and to make available the necessary resources to United Nations agencies and to civil society as they seek to provide humanitarian aid, including to victims of sexual violence.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Nigeria.

Mr. Itegboje (Nigeria): I thank the delegation of Egypt for organizing this briefing. I also commend the Deputy Secretary-General for taking her important trip to Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and for her detailed briefing. We are pleased to note that the Deputy Secretary-General seized the opportunity of the visit to highlight the importance of women's role in achieving peace and development, and even the Sustainable Development Goals.

We also thank Ambassador Téte António of the Observer Mission of the African Union for his briefing.

It is evident that women and children suffer more, are extremely vulnerable to violent extremism and are victims of terrorism in many parts of the world most affected by the scourge. We condemn in the strongest terms the abduction, trafficking and maltreatment of women and girls by extremist groups, including the heinous activities of Boko Haram in the Lake Chad region, particularly in north-eastern Nigeria. Indeed, we condemn the use of women and girls as sex slaves. In this regard, we welcome the efforts of the United Nations aimed at improving interagency coordination, knowledge-building, advocacy and technical country-level support.

My delegation believes that to achieve an enduring result in the search for workable solutions to the challenges of sexual violence in conflict, priority must be accorded to addressing the enabling environment and underlying root causes of conflicts, such as poverty, hunger, human rights abuses, injustice, unemployment, corruption, lack of inclusiveness and impunity.

Perpetrators of sexual violence must be held accountable, but the capacity of the State to do so given the prevalence of weak structures and institutions needs to be addressed. Beyond the law-enforcement approach, however, dealing with the political economy of conflicts in a more holistic manner is crucial to finding potential remedies to the situation of conflicts around the world. In this regard, multilateral cooperation should be enhanced to strengthen States' capabilities in order to deal with the threats posed by violent conflicts, criminality and terrorism.

This briefing bears great relevance to the terrorist activities of Boko Haram in the north-east region of Nigeria, which have led to a huge displacement of about 2 million people and conflict-related violence against women and girls that has been widely condemned. Nigeria has always acted concertedly to ensure accountability for sexual violence crimes. We have also collaborated with the United Nations and other international partners to improve service delivery and enhance protection measures, both in communities and in areas where women and girls seek refuge. These efforts of the Government of Nigeria are in the context of the great strides made by our military in degrading Boko Haram.

In spite of daunting challenges, Nigeria has always been in the vanguard of promoting the involvement of women in conflict resolution, as well as in the promotion of peace and security. In May 2017, Nigeria launched the revised national action plan for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) and related resolutions on women, peace and security. The plan reflects our commitment to ensuring the security of women and children during armed conflicts and enhancing their active and direct participation in conflict prevention and peacebuilding. We have also taken measures to enhance the security of women and girls in the camps for internally displaced persons so as to reduce their vulnerability and promote their safe return to their homes and reintegration into society.

As part of efforts to counter violent extremism, Nigeria is taking steps to deradicalize convicted terrorists through the development of a range of experts in psychology and counselors to pioneer rehabilitation efforts, and to utilize Islamic scholars to counter extremist narratives by training them on aspects of dialogue and religious counselling. We are also working assiduously with the affected communities to design economic revitalization programmes targeted at people most affected by terrorism and extremism.

We seize this opportunity to assure the Council that, following the release of some of the abducted Chibok school girls, the Government has intensified its efforts to secure the release of the remaining girls, including freeing them from the ideological grips of Boko Haram terrorists. Having regained their freedom, it is equally important that they regain their self-esteem and be assisted in returning to their families and back to their schools. Furthermore, emergency teams of psychosocial counselors and health professionals have been dispatched to the north-east to assist with the profiling of victims for appropriate therapies.

In addition, the Government of Nigeria has put in motion legal remedies for victims of Boko Haram terrorism in the form of rape and other sexual violence against children, the abduction of children and other grave violations. Other remedies of a legal and social nature taken so far by the Federal Government include the diligent prosecution of 203 detained Boko Haram terrorists in competent courts of law, as well as the reintegration, reorientation and rehabilitation programmes designed to meet the peculiarities of each victim of sexual violence.

Similarly, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, we heard women talk about the need not so much for more security from the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo when they returned either into host communities or their own communities, but for more microcredit. We could see tents where we they were using coal as fuel for their cookstoves, which was harmful for children. Upon our return, we were able to ask those who were involved with the clean cookstoves programme if they could scale-up the programme across all the camps where this was happening, and actually replace the stoves.

I think that these are concrete things that make a difference when we go on a field visit, we come back and something happens. We were also able to expand the microcredit for those women for that period. But so much more is needed. So I hope that every trip we make will result in commitments that become a reality in people's lives.

Once again, I want to say that we will revert to members of the Council. We are committed to attaining zero gender-based violence, particularly in conflict, and to holding Governments and, hopefully, all those who perpetrate these crimes to account. It is important that this be seen as a work in progress. People live in different realities. I think we saw immense challenges, but also many opportunities; and we believe that, together, we can go much further.

I would just like to underscore our appreciation to the Council for creating more opportunities to make this work. Council members' visits to many countries, including Colombia and the Lake Chad basin, have made it possible for us to raise our ambitions in terms of what we do.

The meeting rose at 12.20 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.8023

Security Council

Distr.: General
10 August 2017

Original: English

Official communiqué of the 8023rd (closed) meeting of the Security Council

Held in private at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 10 August 2017, at 3 p.m.

In accordance with rule 55 of the provisional rules of procedure of the Security Council, the following communiqué was issued through the Secretary-General in place of a verbatim record:

"On 10 August 2017, the Security Council, pursuant to annex II, sections A and B of resolution 1353 (2001), held its 8023rd meeting in private with the troop- and police-contributing countries to the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon.

"The President invited Mr. El-Ghassim Wane, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, to participate in the meeting in accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

"The Security Council and the troop- and police-contributing countries heard a briefing by Mr. Wane.

"Members of the Council, Mr. Wane and representatives of participating contributing countries had an exchange of views."

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United Nations S/PV.8024

Security Council

Seventy-second year

Provisional

8024th meeting
Tuesday, 15 August 2017, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Aboulatta	(Egypt)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Llorentty Solíz
	China	Mr. Shen Bo
	Ethiopia	Mr. Alemu
	France	Mrs. Gueguen
	Italy	Mr. Lambertini
	Japan	Mr. Kawamura
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Sadykov
	Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
	Senegal	Mr. Seck
	Sweden	Ms. Schoulgin-Nyoni
	Ukraine	Mr. Fesko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Allen
	United States of America	Ms. Sison
	Uruguay	Mr. Bermúdez

Agenda

Peace and security in Africa

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council. Corrections* should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (http://documents.un.org).

17-25798 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Peace and security in Africa

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Mali to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. El-Ghassim Wane, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I now give the floor to Mr. Wane.

Mr. Wane: It is my pleasure to address the Security Council and to provide a briefing on the activities of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) joint force, including on its operationalization, as well as on the challenges encountered and possible measures for further consideration, as requested by the Council in resolution 2359 (2017), two months after it welcomed the creation of the joint force.

The cross-border dimension of the terrorist threat in the Sahel region, as well as the serious challenges posed by transnational organized crime and its links with terrorism, continue to pose a serious threat to stability, prosperity and growth in the Sahel region. In Mali, attacks by violent extremist groups on national security forces, international forces and the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) remain a sad reality and hamper the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, one of the key elements for the stabilization efforts in the region. Their activities know no borders, and time and again we have seen vicious attacks also in neighbouring countries and in the broader region. This past weekend was marked by the heinous attacks in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, and on MINUSMA camps in Douenza and Timbuktu.

Worst of all, however, are the consequences borne by the civilian population, which suffers from intimidation and violence and bears the brunt of inadequate or non-existing social services, which this insecurity negatively affects. In Mali, the number of State officials present in the northern part of the country has decreased by 10 per cent compared with last year; persistent threats by extremist groups targeting schoolteachers, students and parents resulted in the closure of 178 secular schools. This erosion of State authority provides a fertile breeding ground for violent extremist and terrorist groups. The countless numbers of young people in the Sahel facing job insecurity and even chronic poverty could all too easily fall prey to these groups. The situation is dire, and time to identify and implement solutions is, unfortunately, running out.

Allow me here to acknowledge and value the contribution and sacrifices made by so many African countries to peace operations on the continent. The countries of the G-5 Sahel are undertaking tremendous efforts, in multiple theatres across vast and inhospitable terrains and with limited resources, to improve security in the Sahel and to counter violent extremism and drug and arms smuggling, including in the fight against Boko Haram, and elsewhere in the region.

Against this backdrop, the strong determination and commitment of the G-5 Sahel member States to share the responsibility to collectively tackle these challenges head on and to protect civilians in their respective territories, as underlined in resolution 2359 (2017), is commendable. The creation of a joint force to address terrorism and transnational organized crime threats, including through the conduct of cross-border joint military operations, demonstrates regional ownership of regional challenges and is an acknowledgment that these will require collective action and unity of purpose. As such, it bears the potential of significantly contributing to the stabilization of the Sahel region, and in turn facilitating MINUSMA's implementation of its mandate.

Since the decision taken by the G-5 Sahel Heads of State in February to create a joint force of 5,000 military, as well as police and civilian personnel, important steps towards its implementation have been undertaken. I should like in particular to highlight the following.

First, efforts aimed at the development of the normative framework that would allow a swift operationalization of the joint force have been made. Key strategic documents — such as the concept of operations, the command architecture, a preliminary budget and a memorandum of understanding on extraterritoriality — have been adopted by the G-5

Sahel Comité de défense et de securité and endorsed by the African Union Peace and Security Council, and the scale and scope of the force and its operations have been further defined.

Secondly, a two-phased approach has been agreed. The joint force is set to initially conduct cross-border operations in three strategic sectors, and subsequently to consolidate and enhance bilateral and multilateral cooperation among the G-5 Sahel member States.

Thirdly, in terms of staffing, General Didier Dacko of Mali was appointed Force Commander of the G-5 Sahel force in June, and has begun assembling his team in the force's provisional headquarters in Bamako.

Fourthly, the force's permanent headquarters in Sévaré is currently being equipped and is projected to attain initial operational capability by the end of August.

Fifthly, immediate priority in terms of operations will be given to the Central Sector, along Mali's borders with the Niger and Burkina Faso, where the force is planning to conduct coordinated operations in October. These operations will build on existing trilateral efforts of Mali, Burkina Faso and the Niger in the Liptako-Gourma triangle. The operationalization and force generation for Sectors East and West headquarters, including the deployment of one company per sector to attain initial operational capability, is scheduled for spring 2018.

Sixthly, the generation of 105 provost police officers, who are expected to fulfil judicial policing functions and to contribute to addressing transnational organized crime, as well as of a small civilian component, which is expected to be composed of three advisers to the Force Commander on human rights, humanitarian and development issues, is ongoing.

Lastly, the budgetary requirements to fund both the start-up of the joint force, including initial investments in infrastructure, staffing and operations in the first year were set at €423 million. Out of this amount, approximately €234 million are projected for initial investments, €110 million for operational costs and €83 million for personnel-related costs. As Council members will recall, resolution 2359 (2017) bestows the primary responsibility for resource mobilization on the G-5 Sahel member States. In this light, I should like to applaud the commitment of the G-5 Sahel member States to pooling their resources and contributing €10 million each to the budget.

Given the domestic economic challenges facing the G-5 Sahel countries, these pledges are particularly laudable. Their joint contribution of €50 million, in conjunction with the European Union's pledged contribution of €50 million, as announced by Commissioner Mogherini during her visit to Bamako in June, and France's logistical and financial contribution to the force worth €8 million, brings the total to €108 million, or 25 per cent of total requirements as currently defined the amount of money needed for the force to be fully operational. The G-5 Sahel countries, with the support of international partners, have undertaken a technical review of resource requirements, which may lead to a better delineation and fine-tuning of the initially projected financial needs. The planned meeting, to be hosted by the German and French Defence Ministers in Berlin in September, will provide an opportunity to further explore options for the support of the start-up of the joint force, to be followed by a planning conference, as requested in resolution 2359 (2017), later this year.

While generating pledges and contributions to meet the requirements of the joint force will be critical, the setting up of transparent, coordinated and effective funding will be equally as important. We understand that, in terms of what was pledged by the European Union, efforts in this respect are already under way. I also urge G-5 Sahel member States to swiftly make good on these pledges so that they can be utilized for the further operationalization of the joint force.

Given the complexity of the issues to be addressed and the multitude of stakeholders in the region, resolutions 2359 (2017) and 2364 (2017) urge the joint force, MINUSMA and the international forces to ensure adequate coordination and information-sharing on their operations, within their respective mandates. Allow me here to highlight a few additional points.

First, MINUSMA is currently prioritizing the establishment of a common post in Mopti, in line with its political and security mandated tasks in Central Mali, which will also allow close coordination with the first focus area of the G-5 Sahel, starting in October.

Secondly, in addition, existing coordination mechanisms between MINUSMA, the French forces, the Malian defence and security forces, the European Union (EU) Training Mission in Mali and EUCAP Sahel Niger will be adapted to accommodate the joint force in order to facilitate information-sharing. The Mission is

also preparing the deployment of liaison officers to and from the G-5 Sahel.

Thirdly, further and as per resolution 2359 (2017), MINUSMA is providing logistical and strategic support, within existing resources, to the Malian defence and security forces with a view to accelerating their redeployment to the northern and central parts of Mali. In that connection, the Mission is finalizing a protocol with the Malian defence and security forces to define the modalities and scope of this support and the coordination of operations in the north and centre of Mali.

Fourthly, these measures, in conjunction with MINUSMA's core mandated tasks in support of the extension of State authority across Mali, will be a further contribution to enable the Malian authorities to proactively address security challenges, including through G-5 Sahel force, as well as to enhance governance mechanisms and accelerate the implementation of the peace agreement.

(spoke in French)

Although the developments I just referred to attest to the political will of the States members of the G-5 for the Sahel to operationalize the joint force, significant challenges remain and a number of issues need to be addressed.

First of all, it is important to respond to the enormous needs, not only in terms of funding and funding mechanisms but also with regard to force generation, training and equipment, tactical support, intelligence and communications technologies, medical evacuation capabilities and providing protection for the force as well as the camps.

Secondly, the potential impact of force-generation efforts on subsequent operations and on MINUSMA's posture must also be considered carefully.

Thirdly, certain aspects of the legal framework, such as modalities pertaining to the right of pursuit beyond the limits of each each zone, must be better defined and require additional agreements among the States members of the G-5 Sahel.

Fourthly, with regard to the rules of engagement, it should be noted that the success of the force will depend upon the support of the people. It is therefore essential to ensure strict compliance with international humanitarian law and human rights law, including implementing measures to mitigate the impact of military operations on civilians. Among other things, the latter implies the establishment of appropriate mechanisms for the handing over to the competent authorities of persons arrested by the joint force, including minors, and the sharing of information on arrests and detentions.

The G-5 Sahel joint force presents a unique opportunity to respond to regional challenges through a regional approach. In order to fully take advantage of that opportunity, it is important that other aspects of the causes of instability in Mali and in the region be addressed simultaneously. Addressing the root causes of instability in the Sahel requires going beyond military action and tackling the governance gap, chronic poverty and unemployment, climate change and financing for development; it is also necessary to address cross-border crime.

I should also like to emphasize the primacy of politics and the need for a political strategy to guide the activities of the joint force so as to ensure that they are aligned with the Malian peace process and other regional initiatives. Resolution 2359 (2017) calls for the prompt and effective implementation of regional strategies by the States members of the G-5 for the Sahel and their international partners. The joint force can make a significant contribution to the stabilization of the Sahel region, in synergy with other existing initiatives.

In order to better coordinate and refocus the attention of the United Nations system on the Sahel, the Secretary-General recently established an Executive Committee working group on the Sahel, chaired by the Deputy Secretary-General, which has already begun to meet.

Lastly, in order to better support and promote regional ownership, it is important that the deployment of the joint force be part of the African Union's Peace and Security Architecture. The Nouakchott process could be an effective tool to that end. We hope that, as the force's concept of operations matures, it will receive the support and cooperation of other countries in the region.

The establishment of the G-5 Sahel foint force has the potential to make a significant contribution to the efforts already under way to stabilize the region. Once again, I congratulate the member States of the G-5 for the Sahel for the considerable efforts they are making. The success of the force will depend upon

both the deepening of this regional partnership and the relevant political framework, and the determination of the G-5 for the Sahel member States to achieve its operationalization, as well as the unflagging support of of their international partners. The United Nations will remain ready to contribute to that partnership and to efforts aimed at supporting this initiative. We welcome the proposal to submit a written report on those efforts in October, as called for in resolution 2359 (2017).

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank Mr. Wane for his briefing.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements.

Mrs. Gueguen (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank Assistant Secretary-General Wane for his very illuminating briefing.

I would like to begin my statement by reiterating France's full solidarity with Burkina Faso in the aftermath of the terrorist attack on a restaurant in Ouagadougou, which led to the deaths of 18 people. Our condolences go also to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and to Togo and Mali following the death yesterday of a Togolese peacekeeper and seven Malian civilian and military personnel during attacks against MINUSMA camps. Those attacks, sadly, remind us of the intensity of the terrorist threat faced by the countries of the Sahel today, as well as the need for an urgent response.

The terrorist threat in the Sahel not only jeopardizes the stability of the countries of the region; it also has a direct impact on the security of many other countries — in Europe and throughout the rest of the world. It calls for mobilization by the entire international community in support of the efforts of the countries of the region, while not neglecting any dimension of the crisis. France is fully playing its part in that effort by deploying to the field the 4,000 soldiers of Operation Barkhane, who are carrying out counter-terrorist actions in the region at the request and in support of the countries of the Sahel. Twenty of them gave their lives doing so. In addition, during the Summit of the countries of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) held in Bamako on 2 July, President Macron launched an alliance for the Sahel aimed at addressing the deep-rooted causes of terrorism in the G-5 Sahel countries, including projects in the areas of education, agriculture and renewable energy, as Assistant Secretary-General Wane just mentioned to us.

Moreover, the security situation in the Sahel remains directly linked to the situation in Mali. In that regard, it is crucial that the Malian parties speed up the concrete implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, without which there will be no lasting peace or stability in the Sahel.

The specific modus operandi of terrorist groups in the Sahel, which take advantage of borders and sustain themselves on trafficking of all sorts, especially in drugs and human beings, requires us to provide a concerted and comprehensive response. It is precisely with that goal in mind that the G-5 Sahel countries set up the joint force, which is intended to provide a coordinated response on the security and economic fronts, as well as at the humanitarian and developmental levels. Their initiative was endorsed by the African Union and by the Security Council, with the Council providing clear and unanimous political support in the framework of resolution 2359 (2017). The establishment of the joint force is also fully in line — and this must be pointed out — with the Council's views in favour of establishing an African security architecture bringing together the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations in the framework of a partnership approach.

The G-5 Sahel joint force will support and complement MINUSMA's efforts in Mali by conducting counter-terrorist activities in the Sahel region as a whole that are outside the mandate and geographic scope of MINUSMA. That will enable MINUSMA to focus on its priority tasks and implement its mandate more quickly. The joint force will also act in coordination with the French forces of Operation Barkhane, which supports its operationalization. It will be important that the force's operations take place fully in line with international humanitarian law and human rights law, as set out in its concept of operations.

We welcome the determination and the concrete actions taken by the G-5 Sahel countries to operationalize the joint force as soon as possible, with the aim of carrying out by October initial operations in the Liptako-Gourma priority zone, located in the shared border area between Mali, the Niger and Burkina Faso. The finalization in the coming days of the construction works at the Sévaré central command post is an important first step in that direction. The

commitment of the G-5 Sahel countries each to allocate $10 million annually for the financing of the force, in addition to their current contributions to peacekeeping in the region, also reflects the high priority they attach to this issue. We must support their efforts.

While it is the G-5 Sahel countries' responsibility to take a leading role in establishing the joint force, we also believe that the international community has a moral and political duty to support the African States in the region that have joined together to fight terrorism by supplying resources to complement the Council's peacekeeping operations. We are therefore pleased that the European Union has already announced a contribution of €50 million intended in part to finance the operations of the joint force's command structures. France is also making a national contribution of major material assistance amounting to more than €8 million, in addition to Operation Barkhane's engagement on the ground.

Lastly, along with our European partners, we will continue to support the G-5 Sahel countries in mobilizing the backing of international donors. After a first such event, held in Paris in June, Germany and France will hold a second workshop in Berlin on 18 September, in order to solicit European countries' contributions in support of the force's initial deployment. Beyond that, the donor conference to be held in December and provided for in resolution 2359 (2017) will pool the entire international community's contributions, this time with the goal of enabling the joint force to reach full operating capacity by March.

However, France, together with a large majority of Council members, still firmly believes that United Nations support to the G-5 Sahel joint force is essential. To start with, on the political front, it is an irreplaceable guarantee that lends international legitimacy and legality to the G-5 Sahel countries' commendable efforts to fight terrorism and its underlying causes. Operationally, it is also the best way to ensure, first, that the actors involved in combating terrorism in the region are well coordinated; secondly, that our resources are being used as effectively as possible; and thirdly, that the joint force will receive the invaluable logistical, medical and mechanical support from international forces that it needs in a complicated situation. We should understand that without that support, the joint force's operations will have a very limited scope.

Lastly, France will continue to work to ensure that the Council follows up diligently on this issue, which affects the security of us all. In that regard, we will soon propose sending a Security Council mission to the Sahel with, among other things, the aim of assessing how far the joint force is operationalized on the ground. During France's presidency of the Council, our Minister for European and Foreign Affairs will also convene a ministerial-level meeting on the G-5 Sahel that will enable us to continue our consideration of the international community's modalities of support to the joint force in the follow-up to resolution 2359 (2017) and the Secretary-General's report on the subject, which is due in October.

The G-5 Sahel States have courageously shouldered their responsibilities by uniting in their effort to combat terrorism, which concerns us all. The establishment of their joint force is giving rise to great expectations on the part of the Governments and peoples of the region who want to see terrorism and its causes eradicated. The Council's responsibility is to ensure that those expectations are not disappointed and to live up to the commitment of the G-5 Sahel and its duty to maintain international peace and security. It can count on France's determination and involvement in that.

Mr. Lambertini (Italy) (*spoke in French*): I would first like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Wane for his very detailed and focused briefing.

Today the Sahel region is dealing with a number of major security challenges, including terrorism, illegal trafficking and transnational crime, which have effects that extend well beyond its borders and are a threat to the region, to Africa and to Europe as well. The recent tragic events affecting Burkina Faso and the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) have reminded us how serious the situation is, and we offer our condolences to the families of the victims.

In the Mediterranean, Italy is witness daily to the effects of instability in the Sahel in its continuing efforts to combat the threats of terrorism, illegal trafficking in human beings and the criminal networks that manage them. Destroying these criminal organizations and stabilizing the region as a whole are top priorities for Italy. In that context, we believe firmly that close cooperation with the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) is crucial if we are to deal effectively with the issue, which is why Italy has ramped up its initiatives

in the region. My country warmly welcomed the G-5 Sahel countries' decision to establish a joint force with the help of the African Union. We are pleased that we can count on them as partners in our shared concerns. Their efforts have also been acknowledged by the Security Council, which supported the joint force's establishment through its adoption of resolution 2359 (2017) and has encouraged the international community to back it as well. Italy will continue its support both bilaterally and within the framework of its action through the European Union and the Council.

I would like to focus on three aspects that we consider priorities for cooperation with the G-5 Sahel, and especially ones that we in New York are in a position to pursue further.

First, I would like to emphasize the issue of coordinating our cooperation. I think it is vital to ensure that the G-5 Sahel joint force is harmonized both with existing regional initiatives such as MINUSMA and with international stakeholders in the Sahel such as, for instance, the European Union, which has been involved in the region for many years. In that regard, we urge the G-5 Sahel countries to engage fully in deepening their dialogue with the African Union.

Secondly, we need a political strategy for tackling the region's problems. In that regard, I believe that conceptually, the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel will continue to be a very useful tool, even if its implementation has been lacking so far. In our view, the Security Council should work to relaunch it and include the G-5 Sahel in that effort, since their goals and those of the Strategy are identical — governance, security, resilience and development.

Thirdly, we think it is important to consider the G-5 Sahel joint force's financing. Their work deserves the Council's full support, because they align perfectly with the United Nations effort already under way through MINUSMA. The European Union has already shown its willingness to support the G-5 Sahel countries, and in our view the United Nations should support African countries' operations on both the financial and political fronts.

Resolution 2359 (2017) marked a new stage in the process of increasing the effectiveness of the interaction between the United Nations and African regional and subregional organizations in peacekeeping. We believe that the concept of African ownership continues to be a crucial element in this and we stand ready to pursue a dialogue with the other members of the Council on the subject of United Nations support to the G-5 Sahel joint force.

Mr. Bermúdez (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to thank Mr. El-Ghassim Wane, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, for his thorough briefing.

I would like to express Uruguay's heartfelt condolences to the Government and the people of Burkina Faso, Mali and Togo for the cowardly attacks of 13 August in Ouagadougou and yesterday in Douentza and Timbuktu. Such irreparable loss of life is once again the painful, sad result of such despicable attacks on innocent civilians and those who risk their lives to help restore and strengthen peace in conflict zones. Events such as the tragic experiences of the past two days show that there that the Sahel still has a long, hard road to travel before it reaches the peace it has desired for so long.

Uruguay commends Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and the Niger for the significant step they have taken towards achieving stability in the region. Their initiative in establishing a joint force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) is the result of their laudable joint efforts to combat terrorism and establish full State authority in their lands.

The terrorist threat in the Sahel region knows no political borders. That is why we applaud the G-5 Sahel countries' regional and multidimensional approach to the challenges. The implementation of the G-5 Sahel joint force is a clear example of national ownership by countries facing those challenges. That initiative demonstrates clear political will that ought to be recognized internationally, as the proliferation of terrorism in the Sahel region is a global problem that affects the entire international community.

In that regard, we believe that the international community must act as partners to support the national efforts of the G-5 Sahel countries. Let us not forget that the G-5 Sahel initiative was conceived originally as an institutional and follow-up framework for the drafting of development policies for the five member countries. More recently, and in the face of the growing threat of terrorism, radicalism and transnational organized crime, it has needed to be supplemented by the creation, this year, of a multinational force of 5,000 troops. Undoubtedly, the deployment of the G-5 Sahel force will be another major stabilization

situation in the subregion. We highlight with great concern the consequences of interventionism and regime change policies since, after the 2011 conflict in Libya, one of its side effects was the destabilization of the Sahel, bringing with it chaos, terrorism and militarization, with regrettable consequences that continue to this day. The movement of armed groups from Libya to the countries of the Sahel has also made possible the transfer of large-calibre weapons, such as portable air-defence systems, anti-tank missiles, mortars, heavy machine guns, assault rifles, improvised explosive devices, antipersonnel mines and others, which were used in the Libyan civil war and which are now being used now to carry out attacks against national security forces, civilians and members of peacekeeping missions on the ground.

Moreover, we cannot ignore the issue of exploitation of natural resources. The countries of the subregion, such as Mauritania, Mali and the Niger, are considerably rich in minerals, while Chad is rich in hydrocarbons. In the case of the Sahel and Africa in general, illegal exploitation by armed groups and the growing presence of transnational corporations that take most of the wealth and profits, leaving minimal income for the countries where they operate, make the situation more difficult and hinders socioeconomic development. Controlling areas that are rich in natural resources and effective border surveillance initiatives are tasks that should be based on an institutional strategy and framework, with the support of the international community. Bolivia firmly believes in the need to establish the future basis for peace and coexistence, joining efforts and means for the proper management of natural resources, with respect for the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of all States.

In addition, my delegation wishes to highlight once again that it is the duty of the Security Council not only to analyse the state of affairs in conflict zones, but also to address the causes that triggered or caused them, and keep them current.

In conclusion, we encourage the African Union and the international community to continue to provide technical support, economic and humanitarian cooperation to all efforts aimed at achieving stability and lasting peace in the Sahel subregion.

Mr. Kawamura (Japan): I thank Assistant Secretary-General Wane for his extensive briefing. We are grateful for this important update on the joint force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel).

I would like to take a moment to express Japan's heartfelt condolences to the families and Governments of all victims of Sunday's heinous terrorist attack in Burkina Faso, as well as yesterday's attack on the camp of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission (MINUSMA) in Mopti, Mali, and its headquarters in Timbuktu. These incidents clearly demonstrate the deepening threat facing all Sahel countries. With that in mind, Japan would like to underline a few priority areas for the joint force, in particular regarding cooperation with MINUSMA.

The first area is ownership. We commend the committed efforts of the G-5 Sahel countries to operationalize the joint force and restore peace and security in the region. This is a prime example of regional ownership, which will be a critical factor in the success of the G-5 Sahel.

The second priority area is the pursuit of common efforts in support of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali. The persistent delays in its implementation are compounded by violations of the terms of the Peace Agreement and sporadic terrorist attacks. The joint force's unique role of supporting effective implementation by isolating armed terrorist groups is thus especially important. A central focus on the Peace Agreement at this stage is critical. To that end, we underscore the importance of enhanced coordination among the joint force, MINUSMA and French forces.

Finally, I would like to emphasize partnership. The scale of the challenges facing the G-5 Sahel countries is vast and wide ranging. Continued partnership with the international community will be essential to restoring stability and addressing deep-rooted vulnerabilities. The Sahel's large youth population requires inclusive and sustainable livelihoods, which can prevent their radicalization and underpin social stability in the region. Together with youth, the role of women in conflict prevention, conflict resolution and peacebuilding is also critical. We believe that supporting G-5 Sahel countries through the implementation of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel is also crucial.

We must work hand in hand with G-5 Sahel countries to comprehensively address these areas. Japan looks forward to determined and good faith efforts by the G-5 Sahel in this joint endeavour.

Mr. Alemu (Ethiopia): I would like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Wane for his briefing on activities that have been undertaken over the past two months since the adoption of resolution 2359 (2017) to operationalize the joint force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel). As usual, it was a very comprehensive, lucid and helpful briefing.

Let me take this opportunity to condemn in the strongest terms the terrorist attack in Ouagadougou, as well as that in Mali against the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali. We express our sympathy to and solidarity with the families of the victims of these attacks, and we hope that the perpetrators of these heinous attacks will be held to account. We fully support the press statement issued by the Council yesterday (SC/12955). This most recent attack again serves to underscore the importance of the G-5 Sahel joint force and the need for its speedy operationalization to combat the threat of terrorism and violent extremism faced by countries of the Sahel region, including Burkina Faso and Mali. In that regard, we welcome the official launching of the G-5 Sahel joint force on 2 July and take note of the efforts being made to fully operationalize it before the end of this year.

The G-5 Sahel countries have demonstrated their commitment to fighting terrorism and transnational organized crime by mobilizing their forces and resources, but they need more financial and logistical support to fully operationalize the joint force. We note the commitment made by some bilateral and multilateral partners in financing the joint force, but what has so far been pledged falls far short of what is needed to cover the preliminary budget required to sustain the force for one year

The funding gap will be a major challenge hampering the full operationalization of the joint force, and there is an urgent need to exert more effort to mobilize international support for the force. In that context, we note the plan by France and Germany to organize a conference in Berlin in mid-September to secure more support for logistics and training for the G-5 Sahel joint force. Without adequate financial and logistical support, it would be extremely difficult to fully operationalize the force, let alone sustain it. That is why the issue requires serious attention. We hope that bilateral and multilateral partners will enhance their support to the joint force.

We believe the holding of the planning conference in line with resolution 2359 (2017) could be instrumental in mobilizing the international community in support of the G-5 Sahel countries. It is indeed vital that the Council support that regional initiative. We believe that it is in line with the global regional partnership that was advocated by the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations and the Secretary-General's implementation report (S/2015/682). It is obvious that the United Nations does not have the capacity to fight terrorism. It is therefore only appropriate that it provides the necessary support to those regional organizations and arrangements that are ready and willing to carry out such operations.

That should be seen for what it is, namely, a contribution of global significance, although, on the surface, it looks local and regional. As the representative of France stated earlier, that is why the international community has a moral responsibility to contribute to the efforts being made by the G-5 Sahel countries. In fact, when one looks at the genesis of the whole crisis, one can argue that the international community also has a political responsibility. Of course, the multi-faceted challenge facing the Sahel region can be effectively addressed only through a comprehensive strategy that encompasses security, governance, development, human rights and humanitarian issues. Therefore, as called for in resolution 2359 (2017), the rapid and effective implementation of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel is critical. We hope that the countries of the region, in cooperation with bilateral and multilateral partners, will redouble their efforts in implementing the Strategy. No doubt, as the representative of Sweden stated, the question of coordination is an issue that should be given very high priority.

Mr. Sadykov (Kazakhstan): We thank Assistant Secretary-General Wane for his insightful briefing.

First of all, I would like to express our deepest condolences and solidarity to the people and the Government of Burkina Faso and to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) following the recent terrorist attack, which claimed the life of Togolese peacekeepers and a number of civilians in Burkina Faso.

The situation in the Sahel remains fragile due to the threat from Boko Haram, the Islamic State and other terrorists, violent extremists and organized crime

groups. We therefore welcome the formal launch of the joint force at the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) Heads of State Summit in Bamako on 2 July. We fully support the decision in order to better combat terrorism and transnational organized crime. Such a force will positively contribute to maintaining stability in the region and complement the efforts of MINUSMA and Operation Barkhane.

The provision of steady financial support continues to be the main challenge due to a significant gap in funding the force. We commend and encourage the continuation of the commitment of the G-5 Sahel countries, as well as the support provided by European Union and France. We encourage countries and international organizations to make considerable pledges at the donors' conference to be held in Berlin in September, with a view to mobilizing adequate resources for the force to achieve its goals.

At the same time, it is unlikely that a strictly military approach will be enough to address instability in the region. Instability is the result of the sedimentation of problems of which violent extremism is only the most recent layer. For us, an important threat therefore is the challenge to the legitimacy of the State and competition between pastoralists and crop growers, which results in clashes among the various communities.

There is a need to focus on the root causes of the conflict and on promoting development. Kazakhstan is convinced that a subregional and comprehensive approach that links security, development and humanitarian efforts is the most efficient way to achieve peace and prosperity. Those goals will be achieved only through more effective implementation of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel. Addressing impunity and corruption, advancing structural reforms in the areas of security, justice and the rule of law, promoting human rights, increasing resilience and the engagement of women and young people are equally important parts of the Strategy

We also welcome the announcement of the alliance for the Sahel — a joint initiative by France, Germany and the European Union to improve development cooperation in the region and promote innovative initiatives among the European Union, the World Bank Group, the African Development Bank and the United Nations. We should strive for initiatives that complement current efforts to address the many underlying causes of instability in the region. Concerted efforts to promote a strong policy on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, with long-term funding for its effective implementation, are also vital for ensuring peace in West Africa and the Sahel.

Ms. Sison (United States of America): I thank Assistant Secretary-General Wane for today's important update.

Countering violent extremism and terror across the globe is very important for us all. As others have noted today, the recent attacks in Burkina Faso and Mali clearly serve to drive that point home. The United States understands the seriousness of the threats in the Sahel region and we were proud to extend a strong message of support from the Security Council to the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) joint force — a noble and important regional effort — by co-sponsoring resolution 2359 (2017) in June.

We also recognize the fundamental importance of achieving political solutions to long-lasting conflicts in order to better guarantee peace and security in the region, especially in Mali, where signatory parties are not keeping their end of the bargain. We commend the G-5 Sahel countries for their sacrifices in countering terrorism in the Sahel and we thank France for its continued leadership on this vital work and for its own sacrifices. We believe that deeper cooperation among the G-5 Sahel countries has the potential to improve their security and complement the efforts of the peacekeeping Mission in Mali. To that end, the United States will continue its long-standing bilateral support for developing and building the capacity of the G-5 Sahel members' security forces. We will work closely with our partners to find ways to help the G-5 Sahel joint force be effective, well coordinated with other counter-terrorism efforts in the region and, ultimately, sustainable.

The United States is eager to take advantage of other opportunities to further coordinate with other donors in the countries of the Sahel. We look forward to the holding of a donors' planning conference, at which we hope to identify, coordinate and synchronize assistance aimed at operationalizing the joint force. We believe that approach will result in greater security and, ultimately, the freedom from terror sought by the peoples of the region. The United States will continue to work closely with regional stakeholders and partners to make sure that the combined international response to this threat is the right one.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate our strong support for the G-5 Sahel countries' undertaking. We will continue to stand with them.

Mr. Shen Bo (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting, and Assistant Secretary-General Wane for his important briefing. We also welcome the Permanent Representative of Mali to today's meeting.

We condemn the terrorist attacks in Burkina Faso on 13 August and yesterday on the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), and we would like to express our sincere condolences to the Governments of the countries concerned and to the families of the victims. Such attacks show that the security situation in the Sahel remains very difficult. Terrorist and extremist organizations' activities are spreading, and transnational organized crime is a major problem. If peace and security are to be restored in the Sahel, it is important to ensure that the countries of the region and the international community continue to step up their efforts and take an integrated approach. The decision of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) to set up a joint force to deal with the region's problems has been approved by the African Union and reflects African countries' willingness to work together and contribute significantly to peace and security in Africa and around the world. Resolution 2359 (2017), which the Council adopted on 21 June, commended the G-5 Sahel countries' decision to establish a joint force, thereby demonstrating the support of the international community. In early July, the G-5 Sahel countries officially launched the implementation of the force.

We welcome those developments and commend the efforts and significant contributions of the countries of the region in combating terrorism and maintaining peace in the Sahel. We hope that the joint force will play an important role in the restoration of peace and security in the region. The international community should fully respect and give full play to Africa's leading role when it comes to solving African problems, and should support the efforts of countries in the region to defend peace and security in the Sahel. In the current situation, it is important for the international community to carefully examine the circumstances under which the force will carry out its mandate. In particular, with regard to the difficulties faced by the force in logistics and funding, we will have to consider practical steps that can be taken, provide assistance that is targeted accordingly and improve the joint force's capacity to carry out its mandate. China hopes that the joint force will seek synergy by coordinating its actions with those of MINUSMA and others. We will work together with the international community in order to continue to play a constructive role in building peace, security and development in the Sahel and in Africa generally.

Mr. Seck (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for organizing today's briefing, and Mr. El-Ghassim Wane, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, for the helpful briefing he has just given us on the establishment of the joint force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel).

We would like to take this opportunity to reiterate to the delegation of Sahel Member States — represented here today by the Permanent Representative of Mali and joined by the representatives of Chad, the Niger, Mauritania and Burkina Faso — the deep condolences and sympathies that the delegation of Senegal expressed following the despicable terrorist attacks on 13 and 14 August in Ouagadougou and Mali. Our condolences also go to every country whose citizens died in those cowardly terrorist attacks, including two from Senegal. We should therefore firmly condemn terrorism and violent extremism in all their forms and manifestations, regardless of motive or perpetrator.

The despicable attacks in Ouagadougou and Douentza are a tragic reminder of the intensity of this threat and its rampant spread in West Africa and the Sahel. That is why, as the Security Council did in its adoption on 21 June of resolution 2359 (2017), Senegal once again welcomes the establishment of the joint force for the Sahel, which Assistant Secretary-General Wane has just described to us with details not only of its launch but also of its expected coordination with other missions such as the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali and Operation Barkhane. Senegal therefore calls the international community to put its solidarity into action by giving broad, rapid support to the G-5 Sahel in terms of financial, logistical and human resources so that it can be operationalized as soon as possible. It is urgent that we ensure that together with the Multinational Joint Task Force of the Lake Chad basin and the support of organizations such as the Economic Community of West African States, the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel and the African Union, and of bilateral and multilateral partners, the G-5 Sahel can

become operational in mobilizing against terrorism in general, in full respect for the spirit and indeed the letter of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel — because it goes without saying that military efforts alone cannot eradicate these terrorists and must therefore be part of a comprehensive approach whose focus includes combating organized crime and trafficking in arms, drugs and human beings, but also encompasses improving education and strengthening resilience to the multiple effects of climate change.

In conclusion, I would like to echo the delegations of France and Ethiopia in saying that the international community must be committed to taking on its moral and political responsibilities on this issue. We believe that the effective implementation of the alliance for the Sahel just announced will be a major step in that direction.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I would like to thank Mr. El-Ghassim Wane, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, for his substantial briefing.

Russia supports a speedy and appropriate response by the international community to the challenges and threats facing the African continent generally and the Sahelo-Saharan region in particular. We have consistently supported a united international effort that will enable us to agree on specific approaches to combating the threat of terrorism, with an emphasis on cooperation with the countries of the region in strengthening their anti-terrorist activities. However, we believe that in order to achieve lasting peace in Africa, the role of the Africans themselves is becoming increasingly important. In that regard, we welcome the establishment by the countries of the region of the Group of Five for the Sahel joint force to counter terrorism, and we support resolution 2359 (2017), which approved its deployment.

The full-scale deployment of the joint force on the ground will help to deal with a number of challenges, not just combating the terrorist threat. Terrorists work closely with various criminal groups, pirates and smugglers. They exploit national and transnational security gaps to carry out their illicit activities. In essence, they capitalize on chaos, instability and the suffering of civilians. They provide material support to terrorists, and, as a result, drug and weapons smuggling as well as uncontrolled and illicit migration flourish in the region. The serious nature of the ongoing danger posed by terrorist groups in the Sahel region was once again made clear by the 13 August attack on a hotel in Burkina Faso and on the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali unit and Malian soldiers yesterday. We strongly condemn these bloody attacks against civilians and peacekeepers. We extend our condolences to the families and friends of those who died and wish the victims a speedy recovery. Without a victory over the terrorist hydra, it will be impossible to achieve political stabilization or to make significant progress in solving social and economic problems.

At the same time, military measures alone cannot solve these problems. In order to counter extremist ideology, its breeding ground needs to be eliminated by better tackling pressing social and economic problems and by strengthening Government institutions in that part of the African continent.

In that regard, the consistent implementation of the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel is now more pertinent than ever. There is a need to increase the return from its mechanism. What is crucial in these efforts is the coordinating role of the United Nations and its close cooperation with African structures and different States. Furthermore, their opinion is a priority in this process.

For the international community, the Sahelo-Saharan region is facing a lot of work in terms of assistance regarding the approaches developed by the African countries themselves, and Russia is prepared to continue supporting them. It is also important for external assistance not to devolve into the imposition of one-size-fits-all solutions that include elements foreign to African States. It was precisely external interference and the destruction of statehood in Libya that led to the wholesale destabilization of the country and the Sahel region as a whole.

Mr. Allen (United Kingdom): I want to begin by offering my condolences to all of those affected by the attacks in Burkina Faso and Mali in recent days. The United Kingdom condemns in the strongest possible terms the violent actions of those intent on undermining stability in the region. They will not succeed. I would also like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Wane for his briefing today.

The United Kingdom has consistently welcomed the creation of a Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) joint force and its objectives to tackle terrorism,

organized crime, people-smuggling and human trafficking. We are encouraged by the early progress that has been made since the adoption of resolution 2359 (2017) and look forward to the joint force mobilizing and implementing its operations. We echo the importance, spelled out in resolution 2359 (2017), of the protection of civilians, respect for human rights and the integration of a gender perspective.

In his briefing, Assistant Secretary-General Wane described the resource challenges faced by the G-5 Sahel joint force. It is important that its needs be clearly set out, so that the international community can explore supporting its operations and finances, including through the donor conference that we heard about today. The United Kingdom is offering training support, including through the European Union, and we continue to explore what more we can do.

We welcome the recent announcement by France and Germany of the new Sahel alliance and fully support this initiative. We urge all Council members to examine how they can provide further assistance, as we ourselves are doing.

We were reminded again in recent days of the security challenges facing the region. The international community is committed to confronting these problems, and the United Kingdom believes that the joint force is an important regional component of these efforts.

In addition to military efforts, however, we need to tackle the political challenges. We welcome the progress that has been made, but we urge all Malian parties to speed up the implementation of the peace agreement and to continue their dialogue. Important steps have been taken in recent months, and we hope and believe that these will continue.

May I conclude on a personal note by thanking you, Mr. President, and colleagues around the table for your welcome to me here today and to say how much I am looking forward to working with all Council members.

Mr. Fesko (Ukraine): I thank Assistant Secretary-General Wane for his update.

Ukraine is extremely concerned by the scale of terrorist activities in the Sahel region. We strongly condemn the terrorist attack in Burkina Faso's capital, Ouagadougou, on Sunday. My delegation expresses sincere condolences to our colleagues from France and Senegal in connection with the loss of their citizens in this attack. Similarly, we condemn the attack against the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and mourn the death of a Togolese peacekeeper. This and other recent militant strikes in the region illustrate the fact that the threat of terrorism continues to loom over most of the Sahel.

The ongoing instability in Mali remains one of the main factors causing a spillover of violence into neighbouring countries. In that regard, we are convinced that the deployment of the Malian defence and security forces throughout the country to combat violent extremists and maintain law and order is urgently needed.

However, given the scope of the security challenges in the Sahel, it is apparent that Mali cannot fight terrorism alone. The international community and the region in particular must continue consolidating their efforts to battle this scourge.

As we learned today, the deployment of the Group of Five for the Sahel joint force is under way. We understand that funding remains a challenge. In that context, we hope that the conference scheduled for mid-September in Berlin as well as other relevant initiatives will help to cover existing financial gaps.

There is information to suggest that Mali and Burkina Faso were on alert about the planned attack that occurred on Sunday. Even though it was not prevented, this shows that MINUSMA's intelligence-gathering operation is bearing fruit. In that context, we believe that intelligence-sharing between MINUSMA and the joint force, once it is fully operational, should be one of the priority areas of cooperation.

Finally, we look forward to the October report of the Secretary-General on this issue and are ready to engage constructively in considering its findings.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I shall now make a statement in my national capacity.

At the outset, I should like to thank Mr. Wane for his important briefing. I should like also to express our condolences to the Government and the people of Burkina Faso in connection with yesterday's terrorist attack, and to the Government and the people of Mali, as well as to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, for the victims of the attacks that took place yesterday.

Egypt believes that adoption of resolution 2359 (2017) represents a necessary message of support to the regional efforts of the countries of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) to address the phenomena of terrorism and organized crime, even though the content of the resolution did not meet the aspirations of those States in terms of going beyond statements of political support and making an international commitment to providing effective assistance for the efforts of the G-5 Sahel joint force on the ground. However, we joined the consensus since the resolution represents a step forward on which we can build in future.

The briefing given by Mr. Wane and the facts on the ground have served to highlight the scope and magnitude of the challenges and risks confronting the States of the G-5 Sahel and of the Sahel as a whole. Those risks extend to neighbouring regions. It is important to address this matter in a realistic way that recognizes the threat and works to provide real and appropriate solutions that are commensurate with the scope of the threat. The diverging views on the role of the Security Council and the United Nations in providing such support must not prevent the drawing up of a comprehensive approach that takes into consideration the fact that a failure to provide sustainable and practical support could double the humanitarian, economic and military cost of any attempt to contain the deterioration of the situation in future.

Egypt therefore believes that supporting African solutions to African problems is the optimal and highest-yielding investment. Supporting regional initiatives is the only way to reach sustainable solutions. Failure to do so would send the wrong message about the credibility of repeated statements concerning the importance of cooperation and partnership with the African Union. Egypt also stresses that we need to find comprehensive solutions to the challenges confronting the Sahel region, and therefore stresses yet again the need to revitalize the implementation of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel.

In conclusion, Egypt stresses that it will spare no effort to support its brothers and sisters in the G-5 Sahel States, be it through its contribution to Security Council discussions of the situation in Mali and the Sahel in general or by enhancing current joint cooperation programmes at the bilateral and regional levels. Such programmes are subject to ongoing improvement in accordance with stated needs and in consultation with the States of the region. Egypt recently pledged to allocate 1,000 military scholarships to commissioned and non-commissioned officers of the Sahel and Sahara States.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Mali.

Mr. Konfourou (Mali) (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) in New York, I would first like to congratulate you, Sir, on the accession of your country, Egypt, to the presidency of the Security Council for this month. I would also commend the outstanding manner in which you have been conducting the Council's work. And I thank you for organizing this Council briefing on the operationalization process of the G-5 Sahel joint force, pursuant to resolution 2359 (2017), a force which has been endorsed by the African Union.

I wish to begin by paying tribute to the victims of the cowardly and barbaric attack on the Café-Restaurant Aziz-Istanbul in Ouagadougou on 13 August 2017, which left 18 people dead and injured others. I also wish to pay tribute to the victims of yesterday's terrorist attacks in Douentza and Timbuktu in Mali, which unfortunately also killed and injured people in the ranks of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and the civilian and military forces of Mali. These criminal acts underscore the importance and urgency of operationalizing the G-5 Sahel joint force with the support of the international community. They also serve to strengthen the shared determination of our States to continue to work together to eradicate the terrorist threat in our shared area.

I would now like to express our gratitude to the Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres, for his unwavering support and for the excellent quality of the briefing just made to the Council by Assistant Secretary-General Wane.

Before going further, I would like to convey to the Council once again the thanks of the President of the Republic of Mali, His Excellency Mr. Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, President-in-Office of G-5 Sahel, on behalf of his counterparts from Burkina Faso, Mauritania, the Niger and Chad, for the special attention that the Council continues to pay to the security situation in the countries of the Sahel, in particular the five countries dealt with in today's meeting.

Since the adoption of resolution 2359 (2017), on 21 June 2017, our Heads of State have been working tirelessly and with the support of friendly countries and partner organizations to operationalize swiftly and effectively the G-5 Sahel joint force. Considerable progress has been made in that regard. Following the appointment of Major General Didier Dacko as Force Commander, the rehabilitation of the joint force's headquarters in Sévaré, in the Mopti region, was undertaken and will soon be completed. Its official inauguration should take place shortly. The headquarters for the central zone, which consists of Burkina Faso, the Niger and Mali, located in Niamey, has already been rehabilitated, and the force support team is being set up at the staff level, again with the support of our partners. The first units will be deployed in October 2017, and all battalions should be in place by March 2018. The short-term operational priorities mainly involve cross-border military operations, the first of which is also scheduled for October 2017.

With regard to the force's budget, while the budget for initially establishing the force and maintaining it for a year has been set at €423 million, it is still being fine-tuned. To date, financial and material contributions pledged come to a total of €108 million, of which €50 million will be borne by the G-5 Sahel countries, €50 million by the European Union, and €8 million by France, by the end of 2017, as has just been explained. Furthermore, Mali and the Niger are making contributions to develop command-post infrastructure, namely, the initial command post in Bamako, the central command post in Sévaré and the central zone command post based in Niamey, the Niger. I welcome the commitment of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, and that of its member States and its institutions, including the Islamic Development Bank, which have expressed their willingness to contribute to the financing of the joint force.

I would also like to assure the Council that the resources allocated to the force will be managed with full transparency and accountability. We are open to all kinds of support from our partners to help us to better manage the joint force's resources. The G-5 Sahel is already working with the European Union along those lines.

The progress that I have just explained to the Council in no way hides the challenges facing the operationalization process and the sustainable, viable and effective functioning of the joint force. Among those challenges, we would highlight the mobilization of the full funding of the force. This is therefore an opportunity for me to renew our appeal to all friendly countries and international partner organizations to help us secure the budget so as to ensure the rapid and effective deployment of the force. In that regard, I welcome the prospect of holding an international planning conference in December of next year in Brussels, pursuant to resolution 2359 (2017).

I also welcome the establishment of the alliance for the Sahel, the first high-level meeting of which is to be held in Washington, D.C., in October. The alliance for the Sahel aims to help development actors to find innovative mechanisms to enhance the effectiveness of actions carried out with their partners throughout the Sahel. It will address the most important aspect, one that will give hope to our youth, our women and our children — development.

We also have immediate needs in the areas of battalion equipment, support for the tactical mobility of the deployed units and the reinforcement of their logistical and protection capacities in the areas of operation. We also require the setting up of a suitable communication network to link the units operating in one area and the joint force headquarters to the three command posts I have mentioned. Finally, we need assistance in the areas of emergency medical evacuation and improvised explosive devices.

On the question of coordinating the work of the joint force with that of the other forces already present in our space, I stress that the deployment of the joint force will not adversely affect the action of the national forces of the member States nor the presence of partner forces — MINUSMA and the French Operation Barkhane — or that of any other friendly organization operating in the G-5 Sahel space. Instead, the joint force provides a framework for coordinating and enhancing joint efforts to increase its impact.

The cooperation and liaison mechanism of the joint force, Operation Barkhane and MINUSMA will be based on a mechanism already in place among MINUSMA, the Malian armed forces and Operation Barkhane. That mechanism, which will be enlarged to include the joint force, is a coordinating body for mutual operational and logistical support, intelligence sharing and the coordination of operations.

Accordingly, it is expected that the G-5 Sahel joint force headquarters in Sévaré, Mopti, will include liaison

officers from bilateral and multilateral partners as needed. Other relevant additional arrangements relating to the proper coordination of cooperation among the joint force, MINUSMA and the French forces, within their respective mandates, remain a possibility.

In the context of cooperation with other States, the strategic concept of operations of the G-5 Sahel joint force reaffirms the force's adherence to the African Union Peace and Security Architecture. It also takes into account the previous decisions of the Nouakchott process, the African Union Strategy for the Sahel Region, and the Joint Military Staff Committee of the Sahel Region, which includes Algeria, Mali, Mauritania and the Niger.

Finally, I can assure the Council that the operations of the joint force will be respectful of gender, human rights and international humanitarian law. A civilian component will be deployed within the force to ensure strict compliance with those standards. I renew the commitment of the G-5 Sahel Heads of State to the effective operationalization and effective functioning of the joint force. In that regard, we greatly appreciate the equally decisive support of our bilateral and multilateral partners and we sincerely hope that this critical support, both material and logistical, will enable the joint force to be fully operational.

The meeting rose at 11.45 a.m.

United Nations S/PV.8025

Security Council

Seventy-second year

Provisional

8025th meeting
Wednesday, 16 August 2017, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Aboulatta	(Egypt)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Llorentty Soliz
	China	Mr. Wu Haitao
	Ethiopia	Mr. Alemu
	France	Mrs. Gueguen
	Italy	Mr. Lambertini
	Japan	Mr. Kawamura
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Sadykov
	Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
	Senegal	Mr. Ciss
	Sweden	Ms. Schoulgin-Nyoni
	Ukraine	Mr. Mialkovskyi
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Hickey
	United States of America	Ms. Sison
	Uruguay	Mr. Bermúdez

Agenda

Security Council resolutions 1160 (1998), 1199 (1998), 1203 (1998), 1239 (1999) and 1244 (1999)

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (S/2017/640)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Security Council resolutions 1160 (1998), 1199 (1998), 1203 (1998), 1239 (1999) and 1244 (1999)

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (S/2017/640)

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Serbia to participate in this meeting.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome His Excellency Mr. Ivica Dačić, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Zahir Tanin, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, to participate in this meeting.

Mr. Tanin is joining via video-teleconference from Pristina.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Ms. Vlora Çitaku to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2017/640, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo.

I now give the floor to Mr. Tanin.

Mr. Tanin: This quarter was dominated by the holding of an early general election in Kosovo, and ensuing lengthy negotiations, deal-making and bargaining to form a new Government. As we meet today, these discussions are still in progress. At the outset, allow me to make a few observations about this process.

First, the decision to call an early election was a deliberate one. A broken unity of understanding brought an end to the ruling coalition; however, those parties that sought a more decisive majority may have fallen short of their expectations.

Secondly, the transition phase has proved to be very challenging. The main coalition was unable to achieve an outright majority. Some parties improved their share marginally, while the long-standing opposition gained significantly. As a result, we see a shift in the configuration of the political landscape of Kosovo, one of the most significant in many years. One factor that may have contributed to this shift is a tidal wave of change in the mind of many voters, particularly the younger generation, for whom jobs, access to education and economic opportunities, reducing corruption and strengthening the rule of law were prominent concerns. Ethno-nationalist rhetoric appeared less effective to galvanize the majority of the electorate into action than in the past. The new political environment after the election is obviously affecting all parties positioning themselves for municipal elections, due to take place in October.

Thirdly, there is no doubt that the election was generally free, fair and competitive, despite the very short preparation time and campaign. The official European Union (EU) observer mission noted this, while at the same time also mentioning the longstanding issues of updating the voting lists and ensuring the enfranchisement of voters outside of Kosovo. We recognize the important contribution of the EU observer team and other observers during the election, and also wish to highlight the role of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in facilitating the vote in northern municipalities and providing technical assistance to the Central Election Commission. Importantly, there was no significant dispute of the results.

The overall turnout was 41 per cent. While this is not dramatically different from the 2014 elections, it was notable that many new voters participated, with variations across Kosovo, ranging from below 30 per cent in some districts to above 60 per cent in others. In Serb areas, the turnout was the highest recorded in recent times. We should remember that Kosovo Serbs have evolved from a position of boycotting Kosovo elections to partial participation to active participation.

The election did not generate a momentum for change in the participation of women. While political entities observed the gender quota under the electoral law, women's representation in leadership remained

limited. There are no female candidates for Prime Minister and few mentioned as likely in a future cabinet. Women's representation in electoral bodies also remained low, constitutinhg only 9 per cent of Kosovo's Central Election Commission members.

Fourthly, perhaps the greatest concern is that the election process itself consumed the energy of institutions during these past three months. In fact, a functional institutional vacuum has hampered progress on a full panoply of governance priorities. Important economic and social opportunities were missed during the period, for example, from the resources that continue to be available through the European Stabilisation and Association mechanism. In late July, the International Monetary Fund cancelled the final instalment of its two-year funding arrangement in the absence of a fully-authorized Government to complete its review. According to Kosovo's Central Bank, foreign investments during this past year fell by nearly two-thirds. The climate of political uncertainty during the last quarter is tied inextricably to these facts.

I would like to draw the Council's attention to another important development in the region — the initiative of President Vučić of Serbia to launch an internal dialogue on Kosovo, a matter I had the opportunity to discuss with him and with First Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Dačić last week in Belgrade. On 24 July, President Vučić expressed publicly that for Serbia's progress to be constant and sustainable, the Serbs should endeavour to resolve the Kosovo issue and avoid leaving "this greatest of burdens" to the next generation. He also warned that if the historical conflict between Serbs and Albanians were not resolved, it would represent a joint failure of both, and that the effort required a "long, complicated and often painful process". Kosovo Foreign Minister Hoxhaj welcomed the statement, while Albanian Prime Minister Rama also expressed his respect for this initiative, reiterating that a lasting solution for Kosovo would be "in everyone's interest".

As history teaches, pursuing fair, difficult and often painful compromise demands strong leadership. It should be clear that such leadership is required on the part of all if we are to reach lasting peace, in the interest of all who live in the Western Balkans region. I stress "the region" because peace and stability in Kosovo are interwoven with peace and stability in the region and the normalization of relations between Pristina and Belgrade. As we all know, the problems are regional in nature and so, therefore, must be the solutions.

As outlined in the Secretary-General's report (S/2017/640), progress in the EU-facilitated dialogue has been slowed not only by political processes, whether in Belgrade or in Pristina, but also by the partial implementation of agreements that were achieved more than four years ago. On 3 July, European Union High Representative Mogherini hosted a meeting between the Presidents of Serbia and Kosovo with a view towards moving this process forward. If serious negotiations over long-term interests remain the order of the day, it should be expected that, with political clarity in Pristina, the dialogue can resume as soon as possible, not simply to implement the main agreements reached so far but also to advance negotiations for the benefit of both sides.

During the reporting period, the 2017 Western Balkans Summit also took place in Trieste, Italy. It was the fourth annual summit within the Berlin process, itself designed to further European integration for all the Western Balkans States. The process reinforces the inherently regional nature of the issues most directly affecting the future of Kosovo. Possibilities for developing a common market, expanding infrastructure and dealing better with region-wide problems and challenges were all on the agenda.

Political reconciliation by itself cannot overcome all divisions. It must be accompanied by societal reconciliation and by rebuilding trust and cooperation at all levels. Working to help foster greater trust among communities is one of the main priorities of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). We are continuously exploring how the Mission can better contribute, within our existing mandate, towards improving intercommunity relations. We do this together with governmental, non-governmental and international partners.

Obviously, rebuilding trust is not an event but a long-term process of transforming mistrust into coexistence and, ultimately, genuine cooperation. Wherever we are able, we are focused on promoting new cooperative activities among municipal and community leaders and institutions, supporting the work of energetic local actors. I would like to highlight some of our most recent initiatives to enhance intercommunity trust-building.

At the end of June, I co-hosted, with High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al

Hussein, an international roundtable in Geneva to bring attention back to the many unresolved cases of persons missing from the Kosovo conflict. This continues to be a significant obstacle to societal reconciliation. Within this framework, we have managed to strengthen the involvement and participation of the missing persons' family representatives and to advocate for far-strengthened commitment from the Pristina and Belgrade delegations, as well as the reinforced support of the international community, particularly the United Nations, to determine the fate of the 1,658 persons still unaccounted for.

Also in June, our mission hosted the first United Nations Kosovo Youth Assembly, attended by over 140 young leaders—60 percent of them women—representing all of Kosovo's ethnic communities. The event was the result of close cooperation with UNICEF, the United Nations Development Programme, the OSCE, the EU and the Kosovo Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport. It demonstrated the vibrancy of Kosovo's civil society and presented a prominent public picture of the progress that can be made. Based on resolution 2250 (2015), participants developed a road map on youth, peace and security for Kosovo, which also addressed young women's empowerment, to help serve the wider strategy being developed by the Kosovo authorities.

UNMIK remains active in its engagement with municipal Governments, among which I can say that strong efforts are being made to tackle the matters of importance to their constituencies. At the end of July, we facilitated a meeting among 10 municipal leaders in the south-eastern part of Kosovo, led by the Mayor of that region's largest municipality. Many practical issues were debated, including economic cooperation and the particular exposure of that region to radicalization and the dangers of extremist ideology. We will be developing similar initiatives in other areas of Kosovo during the coming months. Our efforts to strengthen intercommunity trust-building are aimed at very practical levels, not only building on existing frameworks but also working to innovate new ones based on the particular concerns of local communities.

Kosovo has continued to make steps towards demonstrating its commitment to justice and the rule of law in the international sphere. After a series of final legal steps, including the approval of its rules of procedure, on 5 July the Specialist Chambers, a mechanism to tackle some of the most difficult and painful post-war chapters, became operational in The Hague. It is now ready to receive filings and indictments, with full cooperation from all the relevant Kosovo institutions.

After three months of an election campaign and post-election uncertainty, it is important for Kosovo to move forward seriously and responsibly, and for the international community to work together to continue to provide essential support. In that spirit, we will continue to engage with all of our partners towards our common goal of promoting peace and stability.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank Mr. Tanin for his important briefing to the Council.

I now give the floor to Mr. Dačić.

Mr. Dačić (Serbia) (*spoke in Serbian; interpretation provided by the delegation*): I would like to express my gratitude to Mr. Zahir Tanin, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his engagement in the realization of the mandate of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) under resolution 1244 (1999), and to the members of the Security Council for the attention they accord to this issue on a continuous basis.

In view of the exceptional importance that Serbia attaches to the work of UNMIK, I would like to point out the significance of the recent adoption of the Mission's budget as recommended by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, as well as the initial proposal of the secretary-General to increase the budget. That adoption reflects the realistically assessed need for ensuring adequate staff and financial capacities to the Mission so that it can meet the needs associated with the implementation of its mandate. At the same time, the strengthening of UNMIK sends a powerful message on the importance of the mandate and the role of the United Nations as the overarching international presence in Kosovo and Metohija.

Bearing in mind UNMIK's substantial and long-term role in building and maintaining stability in the province, as well as the need for its adaptation and strengthening following the reconfiguration of other segments of the international presence, I expect this trend to continue in the future. I trust and believe that it will have a positive effect on ensuring a comprehensive and more deliberate approach on the part of the Mission with regard to assessing and resolving a whole range of problems facing the Serbian and other non-Albanian communities in the realization of their fundamental

rights and in promoting the still very fragile security and rule of law in the province. In view of the sensitive environment in which it operates, it is evident that the Mission often refrains from criticizing the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government in Kosovo and Metohija in stronger terms. Regrettably, the even-handed approach in its reporting did not contribute to the Institutions taking more constructive positions.

In the context of the contribution to be made to the creation of conditions for unimpeded implementation of UNMIK's mandate and to support the dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina, facilitated by the European Union, I would like to underline that the continued convening of Security Council meetings to discuss this issue every three months is of key importance. Regular quarterly reporting and UNMIK's ever-more visible presence in the field can have only a positive impact on the strengthening of trust and the readiness of the Serbian and other non-Albanian communities to become involved in the processes initiated by the Brussels dialogue.

By and large, the reporting period behind us was marked by electoral activities, and therefore a substantial part of the Secretary-General's report (S/2017/640) was devoted to the electoral process in Kosovo and Metohija. Noted during the reporting period were pressure and intimidation brought to bear on the Serbian community. That went hand in glove with threats to the security of the members of that community, aimed at breaking the unity of the Serbian voting bloc. However, such practices received inadequate coverage in the report before us. Nonetheless, it is with satisfaction that I note that the success achieved by the Serbian list in the elections has confirmed the political unity of the Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija, which is a guarantee that the constructive policy with respect to the protection of their interests will be continued.

The current stalemate in the formation of Pristina institutions, however, gives us cause for concern, especially with regard to the continuation of the dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina. In that connection, the statement of Ramush Haradinaj, one of the candidates for "Kosovo Prime Minister", made upon his return to Kosovo and Metohija from France, in which he threatened, speaking to "enemy Serbia", that "we will do to them far worse than we did back then" is particularly worrisome. I call on the international community and the judicial institutions in Kosovo and Metohija again not to remain silent in the face of hate speech and the threats to ethnically cleanse the remaining Serbs. We are reminded in the present report, just as we were in the previous one (S/2017/387), of the inflammatory statements made by Albanian political leaders regarding the creation of the so-called greater Albania. They pose an added threat to the process of reconciliation and the normalization of relations.

Alongside the unacceptable unilateral acts of, and the attachment of conditions and caveats by, Pristina, such as the resolution on the suspension of the dialogue and making its continuation contingent upon the fate of those charged with the commission of the most heinous crimes against the Serbian population, the threats are aimed at increasing tension and postponing compliance with obligations assumed under the agreements already achieved. Serbia welcomes each and every appeal by the international community in favour of renewing the dialogue, including the call by the Secretary-General addressed to both sides to resume the dialogue and provide new impetus to the process. Yet I cannot but note that they cast a pall of relativity over the responsibility of the Pristina side, which was the one that broke off the dialogue unilaterally in the first place.

Notwithstanding numerous obstacles and challenges, Belgrade continues to take part in the dialogue constructively, responsibly and devotedly, with the aim of solving the outstanding issues in a status-neutral framework and contributing to the stabilization of the situation and the creation of conditions for unimpeded progress by the Western Balkans region towards European Union (EU) membership. It is noted in the report that limited progress has been achieved on the technical aspects of the dialogue, and in the implementation of the telecommunications agreement specifically, in which the Serbian side again demonstrated its readiness to fulfil the obligations it assumed. However, the other side continues to lag behind and refuses to implement the agreement on the community of Serbian municipalities and the judiciary, even though the agreement on the establishment of the community forms the central part of the First Agreement of Principles Governing the Normalization of Relations and is the key to the survival of the Serbian people in Kosovo and Metohija.

In fact, I was the one who signed the Brussels Agreement, along with Hashim Thaçi, four years ago. In those four years, we have not put into practice what we agreed to, that is, the formation of the community of Serbian municipalities. How long are we going to

wait for that to occur? I know that 1 million reasons can always be found to avoid fulfilling the obligations already undertaken. But four years is too long to argue about not doing it; it is better to say, "We do not want to implement the Brussels Agreement". In that context, I expect the Council's objective view of the situation, and not a case where the situation is defined in relative terms, whereby it is said that all sides are guilty for not implementing what has been agreed upon. Serbia will fulfil everything signed off to in the Brussels Agreement. I was the one who signed the Agreement.

The unilateral acts that Pristina adopts repeatedly, like the recent directive banning the use of Serbian passports issued by the Coordination Directorate of the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Serbia to enter and exit Kosovo and Metohija, is also noted in the report. That is yet another piece of evidence, which has been provided time and time again, that the constructive and responsible approach by Belgrade within the dialogue and the implementation of the agreements reached thus far is continually met by Pristina's obstructionism and lack of political will to work towards achieving genuine progress in the normalization of relations. That position of the Pristina institutions is a clear signal to the Security Council, the European Union and the international community for them to bring strong pressure to bear on Pristina so as to make it fulfil the obligations that it has assumed and finally establish the most important element of the normalization of relations — the establishment of the association/community of Serb-majority municipalities. The prevention of the establishment of a Kosovo army of Kosovo was a clear indication that Pristina does heed the suggestions of the international community.

The unilateral suspension of the dialogue by Pristina concerning the electoral process and the intensification of the nationalistic rhetoric by Albanian political leaders accounted for the lack of progress within high-level dialogue during the previous reporting period, as well. The hope that the continuation of the dialogue will be possible was recently raised by the statement made in the wake of the informal meeting between President Aleksandar Vučić and President Hashim Thaçi with EU High Representative Federica Mogherini on 3 July to the effect that it has been agreed to work on starting a new phase of the dialogue and that it is important to implement the agreements reached thus far. Moreover, I would like to add that Belgrade invested much effort to ensuring that the dialogue was successful, and Mr. Tanin and the Secretary-General, in his report, also mentioned that the relation between the Serbs and Pristina's institutions changed substantially through Serbian participation in the elections. They participate in governance and the exercise of power.

We wonder why the Government has yet to be formed in Kosovo, since the elections have already been completed. The Serbs are therefore not the problem in that regard. The problem originates from the great political instability in Kosovo and Metohija. Seen from the point of view of the Serbian side, I do not know how to judge the various statements made by the candidates for Prime Minister concerning Serbs and Serbia, but Serbia will continue to play a constructive role. As the Government remains to be formed, we face a situation in which everything that has been agreed to in the Brussels Agreement is once again deferred. I therefore reiterate that it has been four years since the signing of the Brussels Agreement.

I must underline once again that there can be no genuine reconciliation unless all crimes, without exception, are tried and responsibility is taken for war crimes committed by perpetrators in one's own ranks. The fact that no legally valid sentence has been adjudicated yet for the killing of 1,000 Serbs in the period since the end of the conflict demonstrates that the judiciary in Kosovo and Metohija is unable to carry out that task. That justice is hard to come by for the Serbian victims in Kosovo and Metohija is evidenced by the recent shocking acquittal of all those indicted for war crimes in the *Klecka* case and the decision of the Constitutional Court of Kosovo to uphold the appeal and acquit Sami Lushtaku, a former member of the Drenica Group of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), a prominent member of the Democratic Party of Kosovo and the mayor of the mayor of Skenderaj/Srbica municipality, who was initially sentenced to 12 years of prison for war crimes in the *Drenica I* war crimes case.

Furthermore in acquitting Lirim Jakupi, also known as "Commander Nazi", the judiciary in Kosovo and Metohija showed once again that it is a tool in the hands of politicians. Such instances are just another indication that there is no intention to stop the practice of covering up and relativizing crimes committed by the members of the terrorist KLA in the Serbian southern province during the conflict in the name of the aggressive expansionist cause of a Greater Albania. I also take this opportunity to remind the Council of the monstrous massacre of Serbian farmers in Staro

Gracko, when 14 people — the youngest of whom was barely 17-years-old — were brutally killed 18 years ago on 23 July 1999. The perpetrators of that heinous crime have not been found, and the decision to cease investigation eliminates the possibility of them ever being found at all.

Let me also remind members of the Council that 14 years ago on 13 August 2003 Serbian children were gunned down on the Bistrica river. Ivan Jovović and 13-year-old Pantelija Dakić were killed while four other children were gravely wounded. The frightening massacre in which innocent children were killed only because they were Serbs was committed so as to send a message to all remaining Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija that they are not wanted; a message to all those expelled from Kosovo and Metohija to forget about their return; and a message that ethnic cleansing will be completed no matter what. Spilling the blood of Serbian youth on the Bistrica was intended to symbolize the erasure of every trace of existence and survival of the Serbs on the land of their fathers. Moreover, nobody was charged or tried for that horrendous crime.

Genuine democracy is predicated on a society's renunciation of crimes and organized crime in which an independent judiciary must play a pivotal role. However, the judiciary in Kosovo and Metohija has shown time and again that it is an instrument in the hands of those who should be the first to bear the brunt of the long sword of justice. Yet as long as paramilitary clan leaders and the patrons of criminal cartels freely walk the streets in the towns and villages of Kosovo and Metohija, democratization and multi-ethnicity of its society will merely remain a dead letter. A common European future can only be built on the foundations of a genuine renunciation of the criminal legacy irrespective of who the perpetrators and the victims are. It will be possible only when a killer is called a killer in Kosovo and Metohija, regardless of whether the victim's name is Adem, Ivan, Ramush or Pantelija.

The message conveyed by the decisions to acquit terrorists and perpetrators of gruesome crimes is that justice is unattainable for the Serbian and Albanian victims of the terror of the so-called KLA, and that Kosovo and Metohija Serbs are dispensable. At the same time, that is telling evidence that the international community has failed to establish in Kosovo and Metohija a society based on the rule of law. In addition to the aforementioned acquittals, the report of the Secretary-General accords considerable attention to numerous systemic shortcomings of the judiciary in Kosovo and Metohija, as well as to its inability to take on and win over the political muscle of the former leadership of the KLA.

Let me recall that, in a memorandum issued following his most recent mission to Kosovo and Metohija, the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights also stressed that, 18 years since the end of the conflict in Kosovo and Metohija, thousands of people continue to wait for justice and that it is high time that conditions be established for effectively trying war criminals, facilitating the return of internally displaced persons and for clarifying the fate of missing persons. Such assertions are a testament to the fact that Kosovo and Metohija institutions are far from the standards of an independent judiciary and unable to try war crimes committed against the non-Albanian population in a credible and impartial way.

In view of the fact that the Specialist Chambers established to try war crimes are now fully operational and that there are no legal obstacles to bringing indictments, I expect that all those suspected of committing war crimes against the Serbs and other non-Albanians in Kosovo and Metohija will be credibly indicted and that witnesses will be accorded proper court protection. Serbia stands ready to provide all necessary documentation and evidence on brutal multiple rapes, torture and savage killings by the members of the KLA.

Serbia is fully committed to safeguarding peace. Its primary interest is to save lives and property for the residents of Kosovo and Metohija and create conditions for the sustainable return of internally displaced persons. Regrettably, the ethnically motivated attacks on Serbs, such as the recent setting on fire of the cars of Dragiša Milović and Oliver Ivanović, which continue unabated, obstruct the return of internally displaced persons in any significant number. These incidents are a consequence of the unending increase of tensions through hate speech and a lack of a systematic response by the Kosovo institutions to numerous security and initiative problems facing non-Albanian communities. They reflect the non-existence of a genuine will to create conditions for security and a sustainable life together in Kosovo and Metohija.

The data from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for the first half of 2017, which has recorded only 218 voluntary individual returns of the members of minority communities, are

self-defeating, to say the least. It is clear that the failure by the police to classify the ethnically motivated crimes as such as well as the lack of systematic monitoring of the situation in this area do not contribute to increasing the number of returnees, nor does the international institutional discrimination of the Serbs, which is manifest in arbitrary arrests, ethnically motivated restrictive measures and the constant violation of basic rights.

We therefore appreciate the activities of the Head of UNMIK aimed at establishing contact with municipal authorities and community representatives for the purpose of protecting community rights, promoting reconciliation, building intercommunity confidence and ensuring the return of internally displaced persons going forward. I propose that greater attention be accorded in the next reports to the question of widespread and pervasive threats to the human rights of the non-Albanian communities, in particular of the most vulnerable, returnees, inter-ethnic and mixed communities within Kosovo Metohija, which are exposed to unrelenting intimidation campaigns.

My statement is also a call to intensify programmatic activities, maximize projects, build confidence and improve the current situation. Of key importance is the full implementation of UNMIK's mandate, including the application of the rule of law, human rights, reconciliation among communities and the return of internally displaced persons. The challenges are many in these areas, as is evidenced not only by the quarterly reports of the Secretary-General on the work of UNMIK, but also by the aforementioned memorandum of the Council of Europe Human Rights Commissioner and his visit to Kosovo and Metohija last February. In his report, the Commissioner expresses, inter alia, serious concern that 18 years after the end of the conflict, the ethnic lines of division as well as numerous obstacles to voluntary returns of internally displaced persons are still very much in evidence. In that context, it is necessary that all actors involved in the solution of the issue of internally displaced persons recommit themselves to working zealously to create conditions for their return, which needs to be unimpeded and sustainable in the long run. Indeed, this is one of the main elements of UNMIK's mandate.

Institutional violations of rights are also seen in the area of the protection of the Serbian cultural and religious heritage in Kosovo and Metohija. In that connection, I recall the public condemnation by the Special Representative of the European Union, in which he called on the Kosovo authorities to respect the rule of law in terms of enforcing the judgment of the Constitutional Court of Kosovo that upheld the Visoki Dečani monastery's ownership rights to 24 hectares of land surrounding it. The report of the Secretary-General recounts multiple breaches of law, disregard for judicial institutions and their decisions, refusal to cooperate with representatives of the international community and violation of the rights of the Serbian Orthodox Church and its faithful. Civil society organizations expressed concern about contravention of the law on the special protective zone for the historic centre of Prizren.

I take this opprorunity to call on the international community to step up its efforts to provide physical and legal protection to the monuments of the Serbian cultural and religious heritage that continue to be plundered, damaged, set on fire or destroyed, including the destruction and desecration of numerous Orthodox Christian cemeteries, reported extensively by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Mission in Kosovo and Metohija. Pristina's expressed intention to resubmit its request for admission to UNESCO is therefore hard to understand, in the least.

I would like to point out that these unilateral acts violate the Charter of the United Nations and resolution 1244 (1999), while Pristina's efforts to join various international organizations have a negative effect on the continuation of the dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina, which is currently at a delicate stage. The most recent example is the request by Kosovo for admission to INTERPOL, which cannot be interpreted as an effort to promote its capacity to combat crime and terrorism and create institutional preconditions for inclusion in the exchange of information within the INTERPOL purview, especially since this capacity is already available through the UNMIK Liaison Office. Further, there is a special department within UNMIK for dealing with these issues. The request is just another push by Pristina to promote its unilaterally declared independence through the abuse and politicization of the work of international organizations.

In conclusion, I would like to say that the positive results achieved in the dialogue demonstrate that there is no alternative to dialogue. The results also demonstrate that stronger mediation leadership is needed to ensure that agreements reached so far are implemented. The indicated commitment to starting a new phase of the dialogue at the highest level and to bringing new impetus

to the dialogue will require a genuine resolve by both sides towards working to achieve a compromise; such resolve has so far been missing on the part of Pristina. It will also require a different kind of thinking, so as to avoid agreements being misunderstood as a defeat for one side or the other.

Serbia is firmly committed to the dialogue intended to promote regional stability. However, it is of paramount importance that the dialogue be based on mutually acceptable solutions to all outstanding issues, without prejudice to the future status of Kosovo and Metohija and with full respect for resolution 1244 (1999). We believe that a serious and credible approach is needed — one that will be courageous and realistic, as well as forward-looking, as exemplified by President Vučić's initiative to launch a country-wide dialogue on Kosovo and Metohija.

Finally, as I expect that Ms. Çitaku will offer information to document stories about genocide, ethnic cleansing and everything else that she talks about, in order not to have to reply to her later I should like to ask the Secretary-General and Special Representative Tanin that in their future reports they not forget the persecuted and exiled citizens of Kosovo and Metohija. What does it mean that they do not mention this aspect anymore? Since 1999, 18 years later, only 1.9 per cent of internally displaced persons have returned to Kosovo. What does this mean? They were once exiled, but nobody mentions that fact any more. They had not been a colonial Power there; they had lived there for centuries. As is well known, the first capital of Serbia, the town of Prizren, is located there. All our monuments are protected under the United Nations. I say to Ms. Çitaku that it is not all right to laugh now, but if she can prove that there is a single monument of hers there and then I will stop laughing at her. Four monuments protected under UNESCO there date back to the twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth centuries: Visoki Dečani, the Patriarchate of Peć, Our Lady of Ljeviš and Gračanica monastery.

The Serbs have lived there for centuries. More than 200,000 Serbs were exiled and persecuted after 1991. Do Council members believe that we should not mention this anymore? Do they believe that their exile has become legitimized simply because it actually took place? Is anyone ever going to mention the need of Serbs to return to Kosovo and Metohija? If you do not believe me, Mr. President, or if you think that I am lying, I will tell you that statistics are a very terrible thing. When Ms. Çitaku says that someone committed ethnic cleansing and genocide, that would mean that there are fewer Albanians than before because they werevictims of genocide and ethnic cleansing.

However, according to the data we have, it turns out that Serbs carried out genocide and ethnic cleansing against their own people. According to the 1981 census, during Tito's leadership and not under Milošević, 43,875 Serbs lived in Pristina. According to the 2011 census, which Ms. Çitaku herself compiled, only 430 are left. Where are the other 43,000 Serbs? In the span of 30 years, there were 100 times fewer Serbs living in Pristina. Does that mean that ethnic cleansing and genocide were carried out against Albanians? Were ethnic cleansing and genocide carried out against Serbs or Albanians?

In 1981, there were 18,285 Serbs Uroševac. According to Ms. Çitaku, as the representative of her authorities here, there are now only 32, which is 600 times fewer Serbs. In 1981, there was 17,000 Serbs and Montenegrins in Peć; now, according to Ms. Çitaku's census, there are 332. In 1981, there were 1,898 Serbs in Dajkovce; today, there are only 17. Podujevo is right next to the administrative line with Serbia, and through which the famous Pristina-Nis highway passes. It is where 2,242 Serbs used to live. Only 12 Serbs reside there now, which accounts for 200 times fewer Serbs. Prizren — the town in which I was born — was the capital of Serbia in the fourteenth century. In 1981, there were 11,651 Serbs living in that town. According to the 2011 census, there were 231; now, there are only 27, not 27,000. That amounts to 400 times fewer Serbs. There can be do denying those truths.

Those who committed crimes against Albanians should be prosecuted but please let it not be said that they were the primary victims of ethnic cleansing. The main victims of that atrocity were the Serbs, given the statistics that I have just quoted. Where are those Serbs now? Because they were forced out of Kosovo and Metohija and into exile, are we supposed to forget them? Should they never be mentioned again by the Council? For the Council, does the history of Kosovo and Metohija start on the day of its declaration of independence? That is why I ask that when the Council addresses this issue, please bear in mind all of the facts presented.

I would like to thank the Security Council. Serbia is not against dialogue with Pristina. It is, however,

against unilateral action. Even now, the representatives of Pristina will mention that the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo should be brought to an end. Their statement will then be distributed here, as a statement made by a representative of the Republic of Kosovo. Has the United Nations recognized Kosovo? Nonetheless, despite all that I have stated, we would like to engage in dialogue. They will state, however, that there is nothing to discuss. If the issue has been resolved, why do they attend the meetings of the Security Council?

I would also like to issue a warning to all countries that call for Kosovo to be recognized and ask them to bear in mind that this is a question of our territorial integrity and sovereignty. They should be grateful that their own sovereignty and territorial integrity are intact. Those two subjects are too serious to be discussed in clichés. We would like to reach a lasting solution on the issue of Kosovo and Metohija, but that will happen only through respect for the legitimate interests of both Albanians and Serbs.

If someone were to show up here and proclaim that, from today onwards, this will be a new State, without the agreement of the country from which the territory is seceding, that would be deemed to be a breach of international law and a violation of that State's authority. It is very clear that the circumstances have changed but a mutually acceptable solution must take into account the rights and interests of both sides.

With regard to Kosovo, it has nothing to do with the right of people to self-determination. Ms. Çitaku is not Kosovar; she is Albanian. As a people, the Kosovars do not exist. The right to self-determination is a right granted to people who are stateless. Her people — the Albanian people — have their own State. This issue relates to a national minority that used to live in the area of Serbia and Yugoslavia, who unilaterally declared a new State. We would like to discuss all of the facts, but we cannot accept that they have nothing to discuss with us. If there is nothing to discuss with us, please do not address any comments to Serbia. A Kosovar Government can then be formed. No one is preventing that. As can be seen, Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija play a constructive role.

I would like to thank the Council for listening to my statement. I wanted to state this in advance because I know exactly what Ms. Çitaku will mention in her briefing because it is all she talks about — a humanitarian disaster, genocide and ethnic cleansing. I just outlined the outcome of the decades-long policy towards the Serbian people. Please bear that in mind because Serbians did not arrive in Kosovo as representatives of a colonial Power. They have lived in that territory for centuries.

This situation could occur in any of the member States represented here, so no one should be hasty in calling for others to recognize Kosovo. That is an insult to Serbia. Serbia is a small country and is certainly not threatening or imposing, but we ask for respect because Serbia, as part of Yugoslavia, together with other Member States — the United Kingdom, France and Russia — established the United Nations after the Second World War, unlike others that fought on the side against which the First and Second World Wars were waged. We remain committed to the principles of territorial integrity and sovereignty. I am referring not to force and violence but to peaceful means of resolving issues. I believe that we have many common interests and are on the right path to resolving the issues, if there is mutual respect on both sides.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to Ms. Çitaku.

Ms. Çitaku: I am pleased to be here and seeing the Council every three months, but I would like to remind everyone why we are here. On 10 June 1999, the Council adopted resolution 1244 (1999) with the aim of resolving the grave humanitarian situation in Kosovo and providing for the safe and free return of all refugees and displaced persons to their homes in the aftermath of a terrible war and a time of ethnic cleansing.

If we try to read resolution 1244 (1999) again for a moment, confusion awaits, since it talks about a country that no longer exists — the former Yugoslavia. The United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) was initially established for a period of 12 months. However, not only has it continued to operate for more than 12 months, today, 18 years later, we are still here because of resolution 1244 (1999) — which, by the way, does not include a requirement that the Secretary-General must report on the Mission every three months.

Let us therefore get real and bring UNMIK to an end. Times have changed since 1999. Kosovo today is free, independent and a sovereign State. There is absolutely no need for UNMIK to be present, because it has no role or function except for some self-invented initiatives that

have been put in place to justify its existence. In terms of budgets alone, since 2009 more than $400 million has been spent to maintain a Mission whose mandate ended years ago. Let us think of the millions of refugees currently all over the world — there are 65 million of them, the largest number since the Second World War. I am sure UNMIK's millions and resources can be put to much better use. It is a shame to use taxpayers' money for repetitive, ill-considered projects. Instead of shrinking its budget and returning its funds, UNMIK has been building and funding permanent solar panels for a rented building in Kosovo. Member States should take action on an issue that has been gone over many times in this Chamber — downsizing the Mission at every level and bringing it to an end.

Furthermore, at a time when the world is facing serious challenges and crises across every continent, we continue to come to New York and take up the Security Council's valuable time simply because our northern neighbour insists on a charade. Just last month, leaders of the Western Balkans met in Trieste to discuss economic cooperation between our countries. Today, Kosovo is an equal member in the forums and meetings of the Berlin Process. When we meet in Berlin, Vienna or Paris, Serbia and Kosovo sit at the same table as equals, as two States. Serbia has no problem when it sees our flags standing next to each other.

So the question is why Serbia insists on asymmetry in this forum here. Why is this dichotomy being tolerated, when it is clearly being misused to project an image that does not match the reality? In fact, let us try to guess what would happen tomorrow if today's meeting did not take place. The answer is — nothing. I know that. My colleagues from Belgrade know that. We all know that. From our point of view, it is not only unnecessary but irresponsible for us to come here and bother the Council with useless debates at a time when its attention is needed to address real challenges and problems in which the United Nations has an important role to play.

In the meantime, on 11 June Kosovo held democratic elections for the third time since its independence. They were the most successful, competitive and peaceful that we have held to date. The turnout was especially high among the Serbian community. International observers noted that Kosovo's parliamentary elections met the highest international standards, except in northern Kosovo, where local Serbian leaders faced pressure and threats, often from the Serbian State itself.

Like all democracies, in the wake of the elections we are now creating a Government. As we speak, the parliamentary constituent session is meeting in order to reach the necessary quorums for electing its various bodies and, later, the Government itself. Despite their obvious differences and disagreements, all the political parties in Kosovo share a common objective, that of Euro-Atlantic integration. On that issue, the Council can rest assured. While our path towards membership in the European Union has been settled with the entry into force of our Stabilization and Association Agreement, we are now focused more than ever on starting the NATO Partnership for Peace process.

In that regard, Kosovo's institutions have been working hard, alongside our partners, to conclude the process of transforming our security forces into armed forces. For far too long we have been consumers of security. We believe it is time not only to fulfil our sovereign duty by establishing our own armed forces, but also to contribute to the regional and international security infrastructure. The challenges we face today know no borders, and they demand that we all work together, side by side. Kosovo cannot afford to sit and be a silent observer. We want to be an active participant and to contribute. We were very grateful for the statement that United States Vice-President Pence made two weeks ago in Podgorica at the Adriatic Charter Summit, in which he articulated the support of the United States for Kosovo's full membership in the United Nations loudly and clearly.

For our part, we will do everything we can to convince our Serbian citizens that Kosovo's army will be their army too, and that there is absolutely nothing to fear. I am pleased to inform the Council that we have already started to reap the fruits of our efforts. On 7 July, Kosovo's security forces organized a graduation ceremony for 61 new cadets — 58 Kosovo Serbs and three Kosovo Montenegrins. Today they are active members of the security forces serving in all of its units. So while we will talk to our Serbian citizens in order to address their concerns, we will allow no one to have veto power over that process.

During the past few months, we have had to deal with a very aggressive and unconstructive attitude on the part of our neighbour to the North.

Instead of normalizing relations, Serbia has been creating unnecessary obstacles in different regional and international forums. That includes the violation of

the implementation of other Brussels agreements, some of which have been completely blocked — such as the ones on energy, justice and the recognition of diplomas. Others have been disrupted in different phases of implementation, such as the agreement on cadastre, civil protection dismantlement, the revitalization of the Mitrovica bridge, the revitalization of the main street in North Mitrovica and the full dismantlement of Serbia's parallel structures in Kosovo. Sabotage continues, and of greatest concern is Serbia's duality in pretending to implement agreements and simultaneously continuing to support its parallel structures in Kosovo, including the illegal municipalities in the north and in other parts of Kosovo. Let me reassure the Council that Kosovo, for its part, will implement all agreements reached in Brussels and, in line with recommendations from our constitutional court, we will establish the association of the Serbian municipalities.

We always talk about normalization, but normalization cannot be unilateral. Normalization and reconciliation cannot be achieved at the expense of truth and justice. One of the latest shameful actions from Serbia was banning former Kosovo President Atifete Jahjaga from entering Serbia to participate at an event in Belgrade that was meant to boost the dialogue between the two countries. Madame Jahjaga was intended to attend the promotion of a book containing testimony from women that were tortured and raped during the 1998-99 Kosovo war.

Acknowledging the truth about war crimes in Kosovo is the only way for both societies to move forward. Former President Jahjaga was not able to read her speech in Belgrade, therefore I want to read out a part of it here.

> "The stories presented in the book are not only stories of torture and abuse. They are stories of the cruellest form of torture. These are stories of rape used as a tool of war. These are stories of a truth that has been attempted to be concealed, hidden and buried. Over the years, I have met hundreds of survivors of sexual violence during the war, in different parts of my country. Carefully and patiently, I have listened to their stories; I have cried for those who needed me to cry with them, and I have stayed strong for those who needed me to be strong. I have heard the story of a woman from the Drenica region who was gang-raped continuously by Serbian paramilitaries for over six months. I have spoken to a woman in Đakovica whose body was mutilated while she was raped. Just recently, I met the child of a war rape victim who died without receiving the justice she hoped for, for so many years.
>
> "I truly hope that you read this book, share it with your friends and family, ask your Government to punish the perpetrators and call for reconciliation with your neighbours. We shall not let anybody hold us hostage to the past. The victims of these crimes will never be able to find peace unless the perpetrators are brought to justice. This is a precondition for long-lasting peace, good neighbourly relations and a stable future for the next generations. The future of our countries lies in our hands. Let it be a future of reconciliation and peace."

No trial, no allegation, no insinuation and certainly no statements today can change history. The war in Kosovo happened as the world watched, as the Chamber watched. That is why the world decided to take action. Any attempt to rewrite history will fail. The Kosovo Liberation Army is not a terrorist organization. It is the most successful liberation movement in recent history. Sami Lushtaku and Ramush Haradinaj did not travel to Belgrade to fight. They fought in their homes, in their country with the aim of protecting civilians and liberation a nation. Even as we fuel those kinds of fake narratives, it is difficult to imagine how one is being sincere about the past.

Serbia needs to deal with its own past, not only because of Kosovo, as Kosovo has its own path now — we are free, we are independent and that will never change — but for the sake of their children and their future. Denying Kosovar citizens their right to exist as a State because I am Albanian is a notion that I have heard before. There was actually an entire operation to deport us from Kosovo because we were Albanians. Does that mean that I have to go live in Albania?

Kosovo is a State that belongs to all of its citizens — Albanians, Serbs, Montenegrins, Roma, Turks, Bosnians. It belongs to all of us and no one will ever tell me again that just because I am an Albanian I do not deserve to live there. We have lived there for centuries. I am sure the Council is not here to listen to a history lesson, but I invite members to find a book on the subject if they visit during summer holidays. There are many such books, written by professionals

and academics, that tell the story of Albanians in the Balkans.

In the last couple of days, a new debate has been generated in Serbia — one initiated by the Serbian President, calling for a historic deal between Serbia and Kosovo, calling for a compromise. Allow me to state, Kosovo's independence, as declared in 2008, is a compromise. President Ahtisaari's proposal was a difficult and painful compromise. Now, all of a sudden, has the compromise become our position? That will not stand. Renewing the ideas of solutions along ethnic lines is dangerous for the entire region. If we reject multiculturalism and ethnic diversity within our own States, within our own borders, then how on Earth do we plan to exist and coexist in the European Union, much less in an ever-interdependent and -interconnected world?

Allow me to say it loud and clear — Kosovo and its independence are not a temporary project. Kosovo is here to stay, forever. Normalization and reconciliation cannot be achieved through partition and subjugation. This debate does not do justice to what Kosovo is today. I would be remiss not to mention that Kosovo has emerged as a place where young people excel in many fields on a daily basis. Just last month, six youngsters from Kosovo — three girls and three boys from Bonevet, a makerspace — constructed Europe's first teen-built electric car in Gjakova. This extraordinary example of ingenuity not only makes us proud of our youth, but of these teens themselves, who, through their innovations, educate all of us, helping us to become aware of our surroundings and environment.

Dokufest, the biggest cultural event in Kosovo, took place last week in the beautiful city of Prizren. Even though Kosovo — because of the circumstances — did not have a film school for many years, it managed to develop and host one of the top 10 international documentary and film festivals in the world. Each year, Dokufest grows larger and brings people together to work and collaborate with not only the best producers and artists from the region, but from across the world, placing Kosovo where it belongs: on the world stage. As the slogan of this year's edition of Dokufest suggests, the future is not dead for Kosovars. It is very much alive, and this future is alive for all of its citizens: Albanians, Serbs and the rest. It is unfortunate that this Chamber is being misused to promote narratives and to fuel hate in our own domestic audiences.

It is true that some Serbs left Kosovo after the war. In the same way, Serbs left Croatia, Bosnia and Serbia itself. But to wave numbers here that are simply not true is not correct. The only reason why Serbs did not participate in large numbers in the census is because the Serbian Government called on them not to participate in the census. There was a massive campaign on the part of the Belgrade Government, calling on Serbs not to participate in the census. We have the census data, but we agree that it needs to be revised. We also have election data. Who is voting on behalf of the Serbs in Kosovo? The numbers do not add up. In the last election alone we had around 70,000 Serbs voting inside Kosovo, and that was just in the north. So, please, let us be realistic. Come and visit Kosovo, and you will see that this debate here does no justice to it.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I shall now give the floor to members of the Security Council who wish to make statements.

Ms. Schoulgin-Nyoni (Sweden): Let me begin by the thanking the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Kosovo, Mr. Tanin, for his comprehensive briefing today. I would also like to thank the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia, Mr. Dačić, and Ambassador Çitaku for their statements to the Council.

Clear and undeniable progress has been achieved in Kosovo since the end of the conflict, now almost two decades ago. However, building peaceful and prosperous societies requires constant vigilance and unwavering commitment from all political leaders, as well as from the international community that stands with them. We welcome the fact that the early elections in June were genuinely competitive and peaceful in most parts of Kosovo, although we regret the incidents that took place in certain Serbian-majority municipalities. We now look forward to the completion of the constitutive session of the Assembly and the formation of a Government. A new Government needs to swiftly start implementing necessary reforms for the benefit of the people living in Kosovo.

Sweden looks forward to continuing its bilateral development cooperation with Kosovo, as well as its provision of political support for Kosovo's progress in the areas of democracy, human rights, rule of law and sustainable and socioeconomic development for both women and men.

The peoples of Serbia and Kosovo are looking towards a future, together, within the European Union (EU). To that end, the normalization of relations is key. Regional cooperation and good-neighbourly relations are crucial for a stable, peaceful and prosperous Western Balkans. Pristina and Belgrade need to re-engage and revitalize the EU-facilitated dialogue. Both parties must implement their respective parts of the agreement, most notably with respect to the dismantling of parallel structures in Serb-majority areas and the establishment of the association/community of Serb-majority municipalities. It is essential that the status issue does not hinder Kosovo on its European path or prevent its membership in international organizations.

Within the framework of the normalization process, women's participation is key to foster sustainable and inclusive peace and stability. We note that the report of the Secretary-General (S/2017/640) describes that UN-Women, together with the Specialist Prosecutor's Office, organized an expert meeting on conflict-related sexual violence. Sweden would welcome the inclusion, in the next report of the Secretary-General, of reporting on these matters, as well as gender-aggregated data.

The United Nations and the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo have made invaluable contributions to bring us where we are today. Present challenges, however, must be dealt with within the framework of the EU integration process, including together with the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo.

In conclusion, we reiterate our interest in receiving Mr. Tanin's view on the possibility of downsizing further the mission's structure, size and tasks, as well as on the possibility of adjusting the reporting and briefing period from three to six months.

Mr. Bermúdez (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, Mr. Zahir Tanin, for his briefing.

I thank the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, Mr. Ivica Dačić, for his statement and take note of the statement delivered by Ms. Vlora Çitaku.

As we have said on previous occasions, Uruguay advocates for strict respect for the principle of territorial integrity and for compliance with resolution 1244 (1999) as the legal basis for resovling the situation in Kosovo.

I should like to begin by recognizing the importance of the high-level official meeting convened on 3 July by the European Union High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Ms. Federica Mogherini, and the commitment of both leaders, which constitutes a first step towards relaunching the dialogue process between Pristina and Belgrade following the pause imposed by the holding of elections in Serbia and Kosovo. We encourage Kosovar leaders to work constructively and advance in the appointment of their authorities. We also highlight the importance of the process of normalizing relations between Pristina and Belgrade and compliance with the commitments already assumed at the international level.

In relation to the tensions and incidents that took place early in the period covered by the report of the Secretary-General (S/2017/640), we reaffirm once again the rejection of all belligerent rhetoric, incitement to hatred, destabilization and ultranationalist sentiments. On another order, we note with interest the internal dialogue launched by President Aleksandar Vučić on Kosovo. The work of regional leaders in search of beneficial agreements can be helpful to both communities.

Uruguay considers it critical to advance towards reconciliation, respect for minorities and their due integration into society. In that connection, we are concerned by the limitation of freedom of movement of Serb-Kosovar citizens due to the non-recognition of the passports issued by Coordination Directorate of the Ministry of the Interior of Serbia and the difficulties they encounter in obtaining documents in Kosovo.

Moreover, we welcome the establishment in Pristina of a missing persons resource centre — an initiative that benefits Albanians and Serbians alike — and we commend the event held under the auspices of UNMIK and the Office of the High Commissioner to raise awareness of this urgent question. We urge collaboration in the return process for internally displaced persons, the maintenance of policies of reconciliation and respect for cultural and religious heritage, in particular holy sites.

UNMIK is doing important work in the area by promoting safety, stability and respect for human rights. We commend the efforts to that end of United Nations personnel, the European Union (EU), the EU

Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Kosovo Force, which, inter alia, have been working with UNMIK for some time. We highlight their work with young people, in compliance with resolution 2250 (2015), the conduct of the first Kosovo Youth Assembly, which promoted reconciliation and a vision of the future, as well as the general projects carried out with UN-Women and UNICEF, among other entities. We also appreciate the work of the various organizations on the ground, working for the progress of Kosovo and the normalization of relations among the communities of the region.

Finally, we recognize the statements of the Secretary-General expressing the deep sorrow of the United Nations for the suffering of the inhabitants of the internally displaced camps who have fallen victim lead poisoning, and we welcome the establishment of a trust fund that will implement community-based assistance projects, primarily in North and South Mitrovica and Leposavić/Leposaviq, which will benefit the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities.

Ms. Sison (United States of America): I thank Special Representative Tanin for his update on the activities of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK).

I also want to recognize the participation of Minister Dačić and Ambassador Çitaku here today.

We congratulate Kosovo on holding successful democratic elections in June, which international observers confirm were free, fair and peaceful, with only isolated irregularities related to voter participation. This is a clear demonstration of Kosovo's democratic maturation. Of note, there was significant turnout in predominantly Kosovo Serb municipalities, highlighting the progress made in integrating Kosovo Serbs into Kosovo's democratic process.

The United States appreciates the United Nations efforts over the past two decades to help Kosovo build multi-ethnic democratic institutions that uphold the rule of law and respect human rights. We also appreciate and support the vital role of the European Union (EU) as facilitator of the Brussels dialogue. We call on leaders in both Belgrade and Pristina to continue taking the needed steps to revitalize these talks, to fully implement the dialogue agreements and to normalize relations. Following the elections, Kosovo's leaders must now cooperate and form a Government without delay.

The United States is ready to work with Kosovo's newly elected representatives on our shared agenda, including advancing Kosovo's Euro-Atlantic integration by normalizing relations with Serbia via the EU-led dialogue process, resolving Kosovo's border with Montenegro to unlock visa-free travel to the EU, undertaking reforms to strengthen democratic governance and the rule of law and foster economic growth, and promoting a multi-ethnic, peaceful and stable Kosovo. As we partner with the Government of Kosovo, civil society organizations and relevant local institutions in this effort, we are pleased that Kosovo's citizens in both the public and private sectors have demonstrated their capacity to work with partners in the international community to address remaining challenges.

UNMIK represents a United Nations peacekeeping success story, but the Mission has long outlived its reason for existing, as we have said before in the Chamber. Given Kosovo's steady and consistent progress and maturity over the years, the United States reiterates its ongoing call to the Security Council to wind down and end the Mission. We are long overdue in taking this step. As a first step, the reporting period for should be expanded to every six months or longer. We also recommend that the Secretary-General provide in his next report an assessment of where budget and staff reductions can be made, with a focus on reducing redundancy, since the Government of Kosovo has long ago demonstrated its clear competency and capacity to govern.

In line with our responsibility to ensure that all United Nations missions are responsive and relevant to the situation on the ground, the Council must take an honest look at Kosovo and recognize Kosovo's significant progress and development. It is hard to justify continuing to support the Mission when we see more urgent and pressing needs for United Nations peacekeeping in other parts of the world. This much is very clear. We have achieved our goals in Kosovo and it is time to wrap UNMIK up.

Lastly, we affirm our support for Kosovo's efforts to develop into a prosperous and peaceful, multi-ethnic democracy, and we continue to strongly support full international recognition of Kosovo and Kosovo's membership in all relevant international organizations, including the United Nations and INTERPOL. We encourage United Nations Member States that have not yet done so to join the more than 110 United Nations

Members that have already recognized Kosovo as an independent State.

Mr. Alemu (Ethiopia): I should like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), Ambassador Zahir Tanin, his comprehension briefing on the latest development in Kosovo. Obviously, Ambassador Tanin, and old colleague, faces a major challenge; but I must say that it is a very worthy duty that is called upon to discharge.

Let me also take this opportunity to welcome the presence at today's meeting of the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia, His Excellency Mr. Ivica Dačić. I thank him and Ambassador Vlora Çitaku for the respective statements, which obviously were laden with a lot of emotion and passion. We respect both of them. The issues are not simple, and therefore, in our view, the need for UNMIK.

Our position on the issue at hand has always been consistent and clear. We reaffirm our support for a peaceful and amicable resolution of all outstanding issues between Belgrade and Pristina in accordance with the Brussels Agreement. We also welcome the ongoing efforts made by the European Union (EU) in facilitating the dialogue between Serbia and Kosovo. In that regard, we take note of the informal meeting between the leadership of the two sides in Brussels under the auspices of the EU High Representative, and their commitment to work on starting a new phase of the dialogue.

Nonetheless, we understand from the report of the Secretary-General (S/2017/640) that there has been limited progress in the EU-facilitated dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina. It is in particular the lack of progress on some of the key provisions of the EU-facilitated agreements, including, among others, on the establishment of the association/community of Serb-majority municipalities in Kosovo, that remains a source of concern. That is why we support the call made by the Secretary-General on both parties to re-engage in dialogue and bring new vitality to the process. We hope that the new leadership in both Belgrade and Pristina will do so in a positive and consturctive spirit with a view to addressing outstanding issues and disagreements through peaceful means.

That requires that both sides refrain for actions and statements that could cause ethnic discord, and instead exert efforts to create an atmosphere of trust and confidence conducive to dialogue. Special Representative Tanin was right when he said that political reconciliation must be accompanied by social reconciliation and by rebuilding trust and cooperation at all levels. That is the basis for genuine cooperation. Respect for each other's heritage is of course very vital in that regard. Failure in that area would very much be fatal — that is even more the case with regard to concerns with respect to demographic issues, which the Deputy Prime Minister expressed with passion. In our view, that should draw our attention.

Ethiopia fully supports the work that they United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo has been undertaking in discharging its mandate in line with resolution 1244 (1999). The Mission's engagement with municipal authorities and community representatives in support of the efforts to protect the rights of communities and to promote inter-community reconciliation and trust-building is commendable. Its efforts to promote reconciliation in Kosovo through greater youth-engagement in support of inter-community cooperation is also encouraging, as is the effort being made by Kosovo authorities to implement measures aimed at preventing violent extremism and radicalization, by constructively engaging youth and women. It is our hope that UNMIK will continue to promote political dialogue, strengthen community reconciliation and ensure security and stability in Kosovo and the region. We also recognize the significant role of the European Union on matters concerning Kosovo, and commend the European Union Rule of Law Mission and the Kosovo Force for their valuable contribution to Kosovo in the area of the rule of law and security.

In conclusion, I would like to say that security and stability in Kosovo and the region will ultimately be assured when there is political will and resolve on the part of both sides. In that respect, we once again encourage both parties to remain committed to dialogue and negotiation with a view to finding a mutually acceptable solution.

Mr. Lambertini (Italy): I would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ambassador Tanin, for his briefing, as well as the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia, His Excellency Mr. Ivica Dačić, and Ambassador Vlora Çitaku.

Italy's investment in the stabilization of the Western Balkans has been renewed. Our commitment to supporting those countries along the path they have chosen towards the European Union (EU) remains unwavering. The outcomes of the summit held in Trieste on 12 July under the Italian presidency of the Berlin process attest to the priority we attach to keeping the European perspective in focus and to encourage Western Balkan countries to consistently deliver on their own reform agendas in order to bolster regional cooperation as a conclusive, complimentary step towards their European integration.

We firmly believe that the normalization of relations between Belgrade and Pristina is an essential element of that picture and a landmark building block of durable stability and prosperity for the entire region. Against that backdropt, we welcome the meeting between President Vučić and President Thaçi held on 3 July under the auspices of the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Ms. Federica Mogherini, who has our full support. We also take note of the internal dialogue underaken by the President of Serbia on the matter and look forward to its development. We urge both Belgrade and Pristina to do their utmost to revitalize the dialgoue, starting with the implementation of the agreements already concluded. I recall in particular the issues pertaining to the establishment of the association/community of Serb-majority municipalities, which we will continue to follow closely.

We welcome the conduct of the June election in Kosovo, which took place without major incidents and in line with international standards, as assessed by the European Union election observation mission. We regret the incidents that occurred in certain Serb-majority municipalities during the election campaign. A solid Government must now be urgently formed in order to achieve meaningful progress in the EU-facilitated dialogue and to adopt the policy priorities that are vital for Kosovo, including on financial stability, economic development and the rule of law. We call on all political actors to do their parts to achieve that goal, swiftly complete the constitutive session of the Assembly, appoint a new executive and contribute to establishing a constructive dynamic between it and the new opposition.

I would like underscore the importance of consolidating the rule of law, justice and the fight against corruption — a sector on which Italy is ready to share its experience. The attainment of operational capacity by the Specialist Chamber is a welcome development. It is now important that it receive full cooperation from all parties and accomplished its task. Likewise, protecting vulnerable groups and minorities and respect for human rights are crucial for reconciliation and for preventing radicalization. We appreciate the endeavour of the authorities to uphold them and encourage them to redouble their efforts. In that regard, we also welcome the initiative of the Secretary-General to assist the communities that suffered from lead poisoning as a result of their relocation to camps for internally displaced persons in northern Kosovo.

In addition to the bilateral ties of friendship and solidarity that link us to the region, Italy maintains long-standing support for the work of UNMIK and the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo, which we strongly commend, as well as being a major contributor to the Kosovo Force, whose leadership recently passed to an Italian commander.

With that in mind, allow me to highlight that the Secretary-General has documented all the strides made in Pristina over the years. At the same time, we are also aware of the road ahead and the efforts required to overcome challenges that continue to evolve. We therefore believe that, in coordination with other international actors, in line with the broader review of peacekeeping operations, it is time to make an assessment of the United Nations presence in Kosovo with the aim of adjusting accordingly to the present needs of the country, We look forward to recommendations in that regard. Furthermore, we are open to an extension of the reporting period by the Secretary-General, one that is more adapted to the development of the situation on the ground.

In conclusion, I reiterate our commitment to assist Kosovo and the Western Balkan countries in consolidating their institutions, accelerating their development and intensifying regional cooperation, thereby advancing towards the European Union, which is the real key to their long-term stability. From that perspective, it is paramount to refrain from inflammatory rhetoric, which belongs to the past. It is time to look towards the future and building it.

Mr. Ciss (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): First of all, the Senegalese delegation would like to commend the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration

Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), Mr. Zahir Tanin, for the clarity of his presentation of the report (S/2017/640) of the Secretary-General. We once again would like to assure him of our full support. Our thanks also go to the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia, Mr. Ivica Dačić, and Ambassador Çitaku, whose statements we have just heard.

Senegal would like to commend the smooth holding of legislative elections on 11 June, which were held without major incident or irregularities. We would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate all the local and international stakeholders who made that success possible. Nevertheless, on the heels of those elections, we cannot but regret the low representation of women, as was indicated the report that was just presented to us. We also hope that the current difficulties concerning the formation of a new governing majority will be dealt with swiftly.

The limited progress with regard to the dialogue between Pristina and Belgrade facilitated by the European Union is a source of concern for my delegation. We therefore encourage the parties to redouble their efforts accordingly and welcome the ongoing efforts of the European Union in that regard, in particular the high-level meeting held on 3 July in Brussels and organized by Ms. Federica Mogherini, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.

We agree with the Secretary-General that another important issue deserves our full attention. In that regard, I wish to address the question of missing persons, which must be an urgent priority and which demands of the leaders of both parties to demonstrate political will so as to give answers to the families who have been waiting for a very long time. My delegation would also like to commend the work carried out in the country to counter threats involving violent extremism. Moreover, in our view, the activities carried out within the framework of the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX), the mandate of which has been extended to 14 June 2018, have been commendable in terms of bolstering achievements in defending and promoting the rule of law and human rights, as well as combating terrorism and organized crime. Furthermore, we welcome the activities of UNMIK in the area of capacity-building with regard to young people, promoting reconciliation, transitional justice, human rights and providing support for the normalization of relations between Belgrade and Pristina.

In addition to encouraging dialogue, Senegal urges all stakeholders to take further steps towards peace and development, in particular by focusing on the full implementation of agreements that have already been reached. In that regard, we reiterate our unreserved support for the joint European Union-United Nations programme aimed at strengthening trust at the community level by protecting cultural heritage, and we recommend strengthening cooperation with regard to sharing information.

In conclusion, my delegation reiterates its congratulations to, and its full support for, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of UNMIK. We would also like to commend the constructive work of the Kosovo Force, the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and, of course, the European Union itself, as they are all committed stakeholders constructively involved in promoting peace and progress in Kosovo.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Special Representative Tanin for his briefing.

I welcome Mr. Dačić, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia, to the Chamber to deliver his statement. I have also listened very carefully to the statement by Ms. Çitaku.

Resolution 1244 (1995) provides the important legal foundation for resolving the question of Kosovo. All parties should adhere to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and reach a settlement acceptable to all through dialogue and negotiation within the framework of the relevant Security Council resolutions.

China respects the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Serbia, understands the country's legitimate concerns on the question of Kosovo and appreciates its efforts to achieve a political settlement of the question of Kosovo. Currently, the security situation in the Kosovo region remains relatively stable, although many underlying complex issues remain. China welcomes the continued contact between Belgrade and Pristina and efforts to push the dialogue into a new phase. We hope that the two sides will remain committed to the general direction of a political settlement, resume high-level

political dialogue as soon as possible, continuously implement the agreements already reached and gradually increase mutual trust so as to establish favourable conditions, thereby ultimately resolving differences peacefully.

For the ethnic communities in Kosovo, reconciliation and peaceful coexistence serve the common interests of all and meet the needs of the development and prosperity of Kosovo and other countries in the region. China hopes that all parties will always put the well-being of their people first, take effective measures to protect the legitimate rights and interests of all communities in Kosovo, avoid any rhetoric that might escalate tensions, and safeguard the peace, stability and development of the Balkans. The Security Council should keep its attention focused on the question of Kosovo, and remain committed to promoting its proper settlement.

China supports the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) under the leadership of Special Representative of the Secretary-General Tanin in discharging its duties in accordance with its mandate and in constructively cooperating with all sides. We hope that UNMIK, the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo and the Kosovo Force will work in close collaboration, make steady headway in improving the situation on the ground and play a positive and constructive role for the early settlement of the question of Kosovo.

Mr. Mialkovskyi (Ukraine): I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Tanin, for his briefing. It clearly outlines the political challenges in Kosovo following the early legislative elections, as well as the number of issues relevant to the stability and well-being of Kosovo residents. I am also grateful to His Excellency Mr. Ivica Dačić, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia, and to Ms. Vlora Çitaku, for their statements.

Ukraine regrets that the political situation in Kosovo remains a matter of concern due to the inability of political groups to reach an agreement on the distribution of posts, which is a necessary precondition for setting up an effective Administration. This stalemate creates unnecessary tensions and could undermine efforts aimed at preserving peace and stability in the region. We call on the leaders of Kosovo to show unity and to prove their readiness to meet the immediate and long-term challenges, including economic development, addressing the energy situation, strengthening the rule of law, relations with Serbia and so forth.

Ukraine also hopes that new authorities will give priority to the implementation of the agreements concluded in the framework of the European Union-led dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina, including on the establishment of the association/community of Serb-majority municipalities. We encourage the leadership in Belgrade and Pristina to show responsibility and to re-engage in a constructive dialogue to achieve progress in the normalization of their bilateral relations, which is essential for both, but first and foremost for the residents of Kosovo. No nationalistic or divisive discourse will do any good for the region.

Ukraine welcomes the resumption of the high-level European Union-facilitated dialogue and the meeting of Serbian President Vučić with Mr. Thaçi, hosted by the European Union High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy in July. We hope that the agreement reached to start a new phase of dialogue for the normalization of relations and reconciliation will be implemented in the short term. In that regard, we took note of President Vučić's initiative to launch an internal dialogue on Kosovo. We hope that it will soon translate into tangible measures.

We share the concern of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General at the incidents of violence and desecration in various parts of Kosovo. Those crimes point to the importance of intensified efforts aimed at improving the rule of law and the execution of justice. We appreciate the valuable work carried out by the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and other international partners in Kosovo in strengthening security and stability. We also commend UNMIK for engaging with local authorities, civil society, youth and other stakeholders in Kosovo to promote intercommunity cooperation, and for building trust and fostering societal reconciliation.

The Mission's support in terms of addressing the issues of protection of human rights, vulnerable groups and cultural heritage, as well as the problems related to missing persons and violent extremism, is both needed and appreciated. Ukraine is convinced that those and other important tasks should remain among the priorities of the reconfigured UNMIK. In that regard, we unreservedly join the calls for starting focused discussion on the reduction of the Mission and for

reconsidering the regularity of the Council's briefings on Kosovo.

Mr. Llorentty Soliz (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Bolivia wishes to thank Mr. Zahir Tanin, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), for his briefing. I would also like to welcome and thank the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, Ambassador Ivica Dačić. Bolivia also listened with interest to the statement made by Ms. Vlora Çitaku.

Bolivia reiterates its call for the implementation of resolution 1244 (1999), including full respect for the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of the Republic of Serbia. Based on that understanding and pursuant to the resolution, Bolivia considers it important to focus its participation in today's meeting on the following points upon which I will comment in my statement: first of all, the duty of the parties to comply with the commitments they have undertaken in the framework of the European Union-facilitated dialogue; secondly, the importance of UNMIK's work on easing tensions between the parties; thirdly, enabling the return of internally displaced persons to their homes; and, fourthly, combating impunity.

With regard to the first point, we call on the parties to fulfil the commitments they have made in the European Union-facilitated negotiations. In that context, we are already working towards a peaceful resolution through dialogue, while respecting the need to negotiate in accordance with international law in order to achieve solutions that promote progress and stability in the region. Accordingly, Bolivia urges the parties to comply with what was agreed to four years in the Brussels Agreement on the establishment of an association/community of Serb-majority municipalities, which aims to ensure the security and human rights of Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija. We believe that progress in fulfilling that agreement is essential to achieve a peaceful settlement between Pristina and Belgrade.

Bolivia values the efforts of the European Union (EU) and supports the initiative of the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy with regard to the informal meeting held in Brussels on 3 July, which resulted in the agreement between the parties to start a new phase of the dialogue between Pristina and Belgrade and acknowledging the importance of implementing the agreements already reached. We believe that these efforts need to be made in order to achieve a lasting peace, keeping in mind that the Serbs and Kosovars could go a long way in resolving their differences by refraining from making statements using bellicose or inflammatory rhetoric. By the same token, we believe that the dialogue facilitated by the European Union is an opportunity to build trust between the parties and find mutually acceptable solutions. This process requires a firm commitment focused on confidence-building measures without excluding the participation of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the United Nations and other international organizations.

Secondly, we commend the work of UNMIK and its joint efforts with local authorities and representatives of the Kosovo community to protect the rights of communities, promote inter-community reconciliation, establish confidence-building measures and facilitate the return of internally displaced persons, including the organization of the first United Nations Kosovo Youth Assembly, pursuant to resolution 2250 (2015), on youth, peace and security. Bolivia values UNMIK's work undertaken in compliance with its mandate under resolution 1244 (1999). We encourage the parties to continue to work together to build trust, maintain good offices, ease tensions and use peaceful measures to promote consensus-based solutions to safeguard peace in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and support political dialogue and respect for human rights.

With regard to internally displaced persons, we take note of the statement issued by the Spokesman for the Secretary-General announcing his decision to establish a community-based trust fund for the benefit of the Roma, Egyptian and Ashkali communities that have suffered from lead poisoning as a result of their relocation to internally displaced persons camps in northern Kosovo. We regret that the return of internally displaced persons to certain areas of the province of Kosovo has continued to be postponed. We call on the parties to cooperate and pool their efforts to assist in this process and ensure the safe return of the displaced to their homes.

Finally, with regard to the special court for Kosovo — the Kosovo Specialist Chambers — we believe that this is a positive step in favour of justice and reconciliation, which represents a key part of Kosovo's challenges. The persons responsible for war crimes should be brought to justice regardless of their

status. It is a moral imperative that all victims should obtain satisfaction when it comes to their right to the truth, justice and redress.

Mr. Kawamura (Japan): I would like to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Tanin for his informative briefing and continued service. I also wish to express appreciation for the statements by First Deputy Prime Minister Dačić and Ambassador Çitaku.

Japan commends the largely peaceful legislative assembly elections held on 11 June in Kosovo. At the same time, we are paying close attention to the ongoing difficulty in forming a new Government, two months after the election. Numerous issues lie ahead for Kosovo, such as the need for economic policies to promote job creation and attract foreign investment, as well as foreign policy issues, including the normalization of relations with Serbia and the demarcation of the border with Montenegro. We strongly hope that the major parties will soon form a Government in compliance with the necessary due process.

However, those issues do not warrant being taken up by the Security Council every three months. The Council has spoken at length about the need to adapt mandates to the situation on the ground, and the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) is a prime example. The most recent report of the Secretary-General (S/2017/640) demonstrates that the risk of violence in Kosovo is far less than in other regions on our agenda, such as Middle East and Africa. A review of UNMIK is required to assess which functions and mandates UNMIK alone can provide. We must address the possible duplication of UNMIK rule-of-law-activities with those of the European Union and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and consider a feasible reduction in UNMIK personnel. In addition, it is well past time to adjust the briefing cycle, which has remained in place since 1999 despite the substantially different circumstances. A half-year cycle or longer is more than sufficient.

Going forward, reconciliation between Albanian and Serbian communities in Kosovo, as well as the normalization of relations between Kosovo and Serbia, ais key. Japan took due note of the recent remarks by President Vučić of Serbia on a final resolution of the conflict, the importance of compromise and the need for an internal dialogue on Kosovo.

Japan strongly hopes that the normalization of relations will be achieved in the near future through sustained and serious dialogue between the two sides. We call on all parties to refrain from provocative ethnic rhetoric, and urge the new Government of Kosovo to promote reconciliation and tolerance, including via the establishment of the association/community of Serb-majority municipalities. Japan also calls on all stakeholders to fully cooperate with the activities of the Kosovo Specialist Chambers.

In conclusion, we are confident that Kosovo will achieve sustained economic development. Kosovo should make further use of its abundant natural resources by facilitating a predictable business environment in order to attract more foreign investment, while also fighting corruption. Japan fully supports Kosovo's efforts and strongly hopes that it will make steady progress towards European integration.

Mr. Sadykov (Kazakhstan): I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Tanin, for his detailed briefing on the recent developments in Kosovo. We also thank the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, Mr. Dačić, and Ms. Çitaku for their statements.

The reporting period under consideration was a very active one in the light of the elections held in both Serbia and Kosovo. The recent events have changed the political landscape and configuration of both sides. We therefore encourage the strengthening of confidence-building measures, which are needed now more than ever. We welcome the efforts of the European Union and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) to provide assistance for the holding of peaceful, free and democratic elections. We hope that a similar procedure will be adopted during Kosovo's local elections in October.

My delegation commends the European Union and the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy of the European Commission, Ms. Federica Mogherini, for successfully hosting a high-level meeting between the two parties on 3 July in Brussels. We view the outcome of that event as advantageous since the leaders agreed to start a new phase of dialogue, which could turn out to be very promising. In that regard, we highly recommend that both sides discuss any new initiatives in order to find a mutually beneficial solution.

Kazakhstan calls on the parties to follow agreements and avoid any nationalist and provocative rhetoric, while focusing on promoting intercommunity

reconciliation and trust, the rule of law and human rights. It is equally vital to implement laws on the use of languages, the protection of vulnerable groups and cultural heritage. Special attention must be paid to the strengthening of the Office of the Ombudsperson, supported by UNICEF.

We see the importance of implementing resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security, with the support of UN-Women, and addressing the issue of conflict-related sexual violence. We also need to implement resolution 2250 (2015), on youth and peace and security, and provide full support to the laudable engagement of young people of all ethnicities in promoting reconciliation. Furthermore, we believe that social stability will be achieved only through the full engagement of the United Nations country team, regional and subregional organizations and civil society groups, as well as youth working to achieve sustainable peace.

We therefore underscore the pressing need for further peacebuilding, conflict prevention and mediation in Kosovo. Peace is achieved if the weakest links in society have their rightful place. We therefore call for improving the conditions for internally displaced persons and members of non-majority communities, through better health services and economic development.

Finally, we encourage the leaders of both parties, as well as the new Administration, to overcome narrow political interests and ethnic divisions and to make meaningful progress towards honouring commitments on economic and political reforms. To that end, it is essential to ensure close cooperation on the ground among Kosovo authorities, the Kosovo Force, the European Union, the OSCE, the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo, the Council of Europe and the United Nations system for the full realization of resolution 1244 (1999).

Mr. Hickey (United Kingdom): I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr Tanin, for his briefing. I would also like to welcome Ambassador Çitaku and Foreign Minister Dačić back to the Security Council.

Today, like others, I will be adhering to the guidance in presidential note 507 (S/2010/507), which encourages Security Council members and non-members to deliver their statements in five minutes or less.

It has been three months since the Council last met to discuss the situation in Kosovo (see S/PV.7940). As the Secretary-General's report (S/2017/640) makes clear, it has been a comparatively quiet period in Kosovo. In June, we saw the successful holding of free and fair elections in the country. While the European Union's election observers noted some voter intimidation and violence in Kosovo and Serb parts of the country, we are pleased that the vast majority of Kosovans were able to carry out their democratic duty peacefully. We now look to all parties in Kosovo to take the next vital steps and form a Government swiftly. The people have spoken. They now expect a Government to get on with the business of governing, getting institutions up and running and returning the country to the path to European integration.

Crucially, that means getting back to implementing the European Union's facilitative dialogue. Progress in the dialogue is absolutely vital for both Kosovo and Serbia. It is the only path to the normalization of relations between those two independent countries. The lines on the map are set; they are fixed. They will not be changed. We should not be distracted by the quarterly angry and excessively lengthy exchanges between Serbia and Kosovo in the Chamber. All that matters are the constructive exchanges in Brussels, such as those between President Vučić and President Thaçi only last month.

Progress on dialogue commitments will also be vital if Kosovo is to continue to improve its standing with international organizations. We will support Kosovo in its efforts to do so. While we welcome our mixed facilitating role between the Kosovo authorities and INTERPOL, we look forward to Kosovo's own independent membership of INTERPOL, so that Pristina can respond directly to requests from partners and so that, together, we can tackle the challenges posed by international crime.

The other notable development since we last met has been the agreement on the United Nations peacekeeping budget. At a time when $600 million was found in savings from the peacekeeping budget, it seems extraordinary that the budget of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) should find itself increasing rather decreasing. What message does that send to the world about the Council's priorities? What is the message it sends when Kosovo gets additional money for solar panels at a time when the Council was able to find savings in our missions in

Darfur, South Sudan and so many other places? That increase in funding is particularly hard to fathom given how peaceful and stable Kosovo has become. As the Secretary-General's report (S/2017/640) makes clear, there have been comparatively few challenges to security in Kosovo in the past few months. That is something that the recent Kosovo Force report also makes clear, noting that the trend in Kosovo is incrementally positive. We all recognize the important work that UNMIK has done over many years to Kosovo's benefit. But it is time for the Mission to shrink, not grow. In view of that, we are disappointed that its budget has increased this year, particularly in the wake of the numerous calls in the Security Council's previous three meetings for the Mission to be downscaled.

I would like to conclude by echoing the comments made by the representative of Japan, and by reiterating the United Kingdom's long-standing position that it is past time for the Council to meet less frequently on this issue. The number of issues on our agenda only continues to grow. As a Council, we should focus our time and attention on genuine threats to international peace and security. All of us in this Chamber should be thankful that the situation in Kosovo no longer falls into that category.

Mrs. Gueguen (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Tanin, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his briefing and for his work as Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). I would also like to thank Mr. Dačić, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, and Ambassador Çitaku of Kosovo for their statements.

Like others, I would like to begin by once again recalling our wish to see the timetable for the Security Council's consideration of the situation in Kosovo reviewed. At a time when the Security Council is dealing with a constantly increasing workload, there can no longer be any justification for maintaining quarterly briefings on Kosovo, whose situation does not compare to the crises where the Council's intensive engagement is essential. We also believe that the positive developments in institution-building in the past few years in Kosovo are grounds for refocusing UNMIK's work and coordinating it with that of other international stakeholders in Kosovo. The current stasis is unsatisfactory given that it is our responsibility, as members of the Security Council, to ensure that United Nations efforts are fully adapted to the situation on the ground. Unfortunately, that is not the case in Kosovo today.

France welcomed Kosovo's recent peaceful holding of parliamentary elections in the presence of many international observers. It is another successful element in the country's efforts to build a peaceful parliamentary and democratic culture and another illustration of the considerable progress that has been made since independence. While the elections were transparent and peaceful in most of the country, they were marred by irregularities in places, showing that the electoral system needs further improvement. We also deplore the atmosphere of intimidation and violence directed at some candidates and voters in the Serbian municipalities of Kosovo.

Once the new Government is in place, it should immediately resume the implementation of the reforms that are vital to Kosovo's future: strengthening the rule of law — a sine qua non for European integration — economic development and full implementation of the European reform agenda. It is equally crucial to ensure that the political parties that are not part of the new Government engage in constructive opposition and embrace a spirit of compromise. After the episodes of tension that erupted between Belgrade and Pristina in the past few months, we expect all stakeholders to work harder than ever to show responsibility and restraint. The resurgence of nationalist discourse, sometimes coloured by community references, is a danger to the stability in the region that the peoples of both Kosovo and Serbia desire.

France firmly believes that Kosovo's future should no longer be a priority for the Council but that it belongs in the framework of a political dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina conducted under the auspices of the European Union. The European Union is very clear on this point. European integration for both countries is conditional on the normalization of their relations with each other. In that regard, it is important that they demonstrate goodwill and proactive commitment at the highest levels. Beyond simple declarations of intent, we expect all the agreements concluded in 2013 and 2015 to be put into effect as soon as possible, including that on the establishment of an association/community of Serb-majority municipalities, which is a key element in their dialogue.

We welcome the mediation efforts that the European Union and its High Representative for Foreign Affairs

and Security Policy, Ms. Federica Mogherini, have been making since the beginning of the year, and we hope that the meeting on 3 July of Presidents Thaçi and Vučić will genuinely revitalize the dialogue. We urge the Kosovo and Serbian authorities to intensify their efforts to achieve more concrete results in this area in the next few months. All sides must do their part by adopting a constructive attitude and refraining from any unnecessary provocations that could endanger the stability of the region.

Lastly, a continued effort to consolidate the rule of law in Kosovo must remain a priority. It is a very firm European requirement, one that we support, and there is still a great deal to be done where strengthening administrative capacity and justice and combating corruption and organized crime are concerned. It also involves fighting radicalization in all its forms, and we welcome Kosovo's unconditional commitment in that regard, both locally and as part of the international coalition against Da'esh.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We welcome the participation in today's meeting of Mr. Ivica Dačić, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, and share his serious concerns about the situation in Kosovo. We thank Mr. Zahir Tanin, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, and his team for their work and for their objective briefing on the activities of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). The assessments we have heard show that the area continues to have serious, major problems that require urgent solutions as well as the attention of the international community. Needless to say, we also listened attentively to Ms. Çitaku's statement.

Today a number of delegations painted a delightful picture of events that does not jibe with our appraisal, which I will share with the Council, if I may. The Kosovo project continues to reveal its flimsy foundations. There was new proof of the dysfunctionality of Kosovo's artificially created institutions in the eruption of an internal political crisis there, as a result of which the winners of the extraordinary parliamentary elections of 11 June have been unable to get any work done for more than two months. It appears that the politicians in Pristina, with no fear of accountability, are defaulting on the commitments they made in the framework of the Brussels dialogue. There has been no movement whatever to settle the fundamental question of the creation of a Serb-majority community of municipalities in Kosovo, which was agreed on as long ago as April 2013. We urge the European Union mediators to intensify their efforts to resolve this issue so that the crucial guarantees of the rights of Kosovo Serbs and the area's other minorities can finally be assured.

The problems related to the protection of Serbian religious and cultural heritage are as critical as ever. We are concerned about the fact that physical attacks against Serbs continue, arson is committed against their property and there are attempts to prevent refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) from returning. There are serious concerns as well about the ongoing attempts by the Kosovo Albanian authorities to appropriate property belonging to the Serbian Orthodox Church, as well as problems in ensuring the rights of believers. In that regard, we would like to draw members' attention to yet more specific cases of illegal actions by the Kosovo authorities regarding Church property.

For example, the Kosovo Anti-Corruption Agency, which is leasing a building on a plot of land belonging to the only functioning Orthodox Cathedral in Pristina, Saint Nicholas, has not paid rent since November 2013. Arrears now amount to € 400,000 — a sum that the debtors, the Anti-corruption Agency, are not planning to pay. The numerous attempts by the Serbian Orthodox Church to see justice prevail in the municipal administration have led to naught. Neither have appeals to the United States or the European Union. The Serbian Orthodox Church is planning to take the case to court, but even a positive verdict would not necessarily be carried out, in the light of the pitiful state of the judicial system.

Let me give another example. There was a decision ya Kosovo court, where international judges work, which confirmed the property rights of the Visoki Dečani Monastery, which, incidentally, is a UNESCO World Heritage site. However, the municipality leadership is not upholding the ruling, as it apparently runs counter to the interests of the Albanian people. The Kosovo authorities are ignoring the request of the Serbian Orthodox Church to renovate a number of religious buildings, including the Church of Christ the Saviour in Pristina. The Kosovo Albanians are trying to erect an economic blockade against the Serbian Orthodox Church and deprive it of its property and means of existence. Such steps prove that Pristina's policy to build a multi-ethnic society in the province has failed

The Kosovo Albanian Administration is creating obstacles to Serbian pilgrims and IDPs visiting the province. The situation should not go unheeded. Inter alia, in the context of Pristina's considerations of a repeat request to join UNESCO, there is also a regrettable situation with the judiciary in Kosovo. Kosovo Albanians judges are constantly replacing foreign servants of lady justice, and they are subject to political pressure. Often their verdicts are overturned by higher bodies or are returned for further work. The process is drawn out unjustifiably.

There are also serious concerns in the province with upholding the rule of law and combating corruption. The Kosovo Albanian authorities are not respecting agreements on the freedom of movement of Serbian document holders. Pristina considers such documents as void, in particular those issued by the Serbian municipalities in northern Kosovo, and ban their use for moving around Kosovo by forcing people to obtain Republic of Kosovo identification cards.

There has been slow progress in carrying out a full-scale investigation of abuses by the so-called Kosovo Liberation Army and in bringing to justice all of those perpetrators, irrespective of their current status. All the legal obstacles to the start of the work of the Specialist Chambers in The Hague have been eliminated. We trust that soon the Security Council will receive information on initial specific results of its work.

Curbing the spread of radicalism and terrorism in Kosovo is still of relevance. The territory of the province is being used for recruiting fighters to fight in the Middle East alongside extremists and to prepare them for terrorist acts in other countries. We note the confrontational stance of our Western partners in Kosovo towards Russia. How else can we qualify the provocative statements made by representatives of NATO urging the Kosovo authorities to be ready to counter "the hybrid war", which apparently Russia is conducting in order to expand its influence in the Western Balkans. The pronouncements that Russia is apparently seeking to redraw the borders in the Western Balkans are absurd blatant lies and glaring attempts to pit us against the people who are living in the region. Let me remind the Council that in 1999 the United States and its NATO allies conducted a genuine hot war for which nobody has borne responsibility.

The Kosovo Force (KFOR) Commander, Major General Fungo, speaking in the European Parliament, mentioned Russia as a main threat and challenge that Kosovo is encountering, along with inter-ethnic tension, religious extremism and problems with refugees and migrants. Once again, no one has managed to submit any concrete evidence in that connection. Today it seems to have become trendy in some places to accuse Russia without any evidence whatsoever. That is called defamation. For a long time, the KFOR command in Kosovo refused contact with representatives from Russia. We know that recently that was resolved, as Russian representatives were asked to go to the NATO headquarters in Brussels for a meeting with the KFOR command. That is certainly an effective format for discussion that is not trivial

Avoiding contact with the people from a country that is a permanent member of the Security Council runs counter to the KFOR mandate, as stipulated in resolution 1244 (1999). That practice is absolutely unacceptable. We urgently call for an end to the defamation of Russia and its foreign policy line, including in the Western Balkans. Our policy in the region is still based on respect for partners and their interests. We note with regret that the gross imposition of the NATO logic in the region is clearly leading to the destabilization of an already fragile situation in the Balkans. For example, Montenegro has joined the Alliance, despite the opinion of people in the country, who they did not even deign to ask. It took more than two years to overcome the drawn out political crisis in Macedonia that was caused by foreign interference, but this was not Russia, but rather an attempt to overcome the desire of the electorate.

Once again, even though Russia was accused, Russia did not interfere. We see these as attempts to undermine the traditional friendship links between Russia and its Western Balkan countries. We are linked by many centuries of friendship and ties to those people. Imposing NATO policies and trying to draw those countries into the alliance leads to an exacerbation of the manifold political, ethnic, religious and inter-ethnic issues in the Balkans, which are likely to lead to an increase in the potential for conflict in the region.

I turn back to Kosovo. In the current situation, we see no basis for raising the issue of revising the quarterly review and the format for considering the Kosovo issue in the Security Council. There is no room for decreasing the level of the United Nations presence in the province through UNMIK. The United Nations is playing a key, irreplaceable role in Kosovo's

affairs, and UNMIK remains a central instrument for international monitoring and for dealing with issues on normalizing the situation — in line with resolution 1244 (1999), which is still fully in force. As for the idea of closing UNMIK, we would like to underscore that we are categorically against it. It is unacceptable for the Security Council to be guided purely by financial considerations in making decisions on the United Nations presence in Kosovo. Indeed, it seems to betray a desire to get rid of a structure that is able to provide an objective picture of what is happening in the province. We must not create a virtual reality and try to put a positive spin on a situation that, de facto, since the province separated from Serbia, has only deteriorated.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I shall now make a statement in my national capacity.

Allow me to express my sincere gratitude to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Zahir Tanin, for his very comprehensive briefing to the Council on the report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) (S/2017/640). Egypt reiterates its full support to him in fulfilling his mandate, and we welcome the key role of the United Nations during the reporting period in helping Kosovo to build its institutions.

We also welcome Mr. Ivica Dačić, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, and Ambassador Vlora Çitaku, and I thank them for their statements.

Political, economic and security developments in Kosovo have a direct impact on peace and stability in the region. Egypt, bearing this in mind, welcomes the fact that success of Kosovo institutions in holding the planned legislative elections and calls on political actors to overcome without delay their differences and to form a new Government, so that they can take on the challenges facing them, push forward with the reform agenda and build on the advances made in the economic and security fields and in the establishment of the rule of law, as reflected in the reporting period. These include accelerating economic growth, reducing unemployment and improving the investment climate in Kosovo.

We express our concern regarding the references in the report to the various serious challenges facing the Pristina-Belgrade dialogue. Egypt believes that the high-level dialogue between the two parties, facilitated by the European Union, is the most appropriate forum for the peaceful resolution of all pending matters, and we urge Pristina and Belgrade to resume this dialogue. Here we welcome the informal meeting held between Presidents Vučić and Thaçi in July in Brussels and the statement by both Presidents on the importance of the implementation of the agreements already reached without further delay.

We also express our concern with regard to the increase in the level of hatred and nationalist and ethnic sentiments, and we urge both sides to refrain from inflammatory rhetoric, which only fuels internal tensions and divisions. We call on both sides to show the greatest possible restraint and to avoid taking any unilateral measures or steps that could fuel tensions.

We call on the various parties in Kosovo to follow the path of dialogue and understanding and to strive to deal with all issues in the framework of existing State institutions.

In conclusion, and given the importance that we attach to consolidating peace and stability in the region, we wish to once again reaffirm the importance of the efforts of the international community aimed at helping Pristina and Belgrade to overcome the differences between them and reaching compromise solutions that are just and lasting, that are accepted by both sides and that could lay the groundwork for peace and stability in the region. We also encourage them to speed up regional integration into European institutions, which would improve the situation in the region as a whole.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

The representative of Serbia has asked for the floor to make a further statement. I now give him the floor.

Mr. Dačić (interpretation from Serbian provided by the delegation): As I said earlier, Ms. Çitaku devoted her time to speaking about the same things she spoke of previously and levelling accusations related to the alleged ethnic cleansing of Albanians. She said she did not speak about false narratives but simply provided specific precise data. I think that she insulted the Security Council, member States and representatives, because she said that this was a charade. I do not know if the Council is ready to accept this statement; I do not have anything against that. I am much more worried about other things: the fact that the United States, the United Kingdom and France have obviously aligned

their position with that of Kosovo concerning the need for the finalization of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo.

So how is this to be interpreted? You say that you want to be Serbia's partner. Do you believe that it is enough to carry out the secession process and now say, we do not need to speak about this anymore? I posed a question; is someone going to reply to this question? Is anyone ever going to mention here the more than 200,000 Serbs who were persecuted of whose number only 1.9 per cent returned? Do you believe that we should never mention this again?

I was presenting data to the Council from 1981, the year when the protests started in Kosovo and it started to ask for independence and for the status of a republic. Milošević was not in power at the time; it was the time of Communist Yugoslavia. At that time, 43,000 Serbs lived in Pristina. So where are those Serbs today? I mentioned other towns as well. Are you going to say, all right, they are not there anymore, and we will not gather here anymore and talk about it?

All of the large Powers I mentioned have deeply hurt the Serbian people by their conduct, because Serbian victims want justice, just as Albanian and all other victims do. If 1,000 people died between 1999 and today, and no one was accused in that connection, then Serbian victims also seek justice. After all, the United States denies 41 per cent of visa applications from Kosovo. That is official information. If the situation in Kosovo is so good, as Ms. Çitaku says it is, then why are Albanians fleeing Kosovo en masse and going to Europe?

Turning to the Government, the President speaks of peace and his various initiatives. Mr. Mustafa also speaks about various initiatives in three municipalities of central Serbia and says that he has been receiving representatives from eastern Kosovo. So whom are you lying to? You are representing only yourself here today, but in fact you are the people who persecuted hundreds of thousands of Serbs in Kosovo. Of course, I do not mean Ms. Çitaku personally, but there is no need to pretend that this never happened at all.

Ms. Çitaku spoke of the Kosovo Liberation Army as the most successful liberation movement, but it is on the United States list of terrorist organizations. I simply want to ask Ms. Çitaku, when she speaks about this issue, to bear in mind that Serbia is repaying Kosovo's debts from the time of Yugoslavia. Why does she not speak about that? Why not say that she does not want us to repay their loans? A few million dollars have already been paid. In one instance Kosovo is Serbia, and in another it is not.

Anyone who believes that the situation in Kosovo has been resolved is living in a state of deep confusion. One Prime Minister has been accused of war crimes while another is in favour of the unification of Kosovo and Albania. Without going any deeper, anyone who believes that it is enough to declare a unilateral secession to resolve the issue, or that simply recognizing a country is enough to settle the issue, has forgotten history and all that happened in the Balkans over the past century. France and Serbia are strategic partners. We have a signed agreement. How logical is it to make such statements here when we have not spoken about it before?

I do not wish the fate of Serbia on any country. I hope that what has happened to Serbia happens to no country represented here. We will certainly not be the cause of wars. The majority of Albanians from Kosovo participate in the wars of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant. There are no participants from Serbia there. If anyone is unaware of that, it would be difficult for someone from the outside to explain it.

If someone believes that meetings like today's should no longer take place, I urge them to make that decision. Let them propose it. Let them propose that resolution 1244 (1999) be revoked and reversed. Who is asking Serbia about it? We know the international situation. We are well aware that such a decision cannot be adopted in the Security Council; that being the case, I would ask certain members not to insult Serbia. Serbia is a proud country that contributed greatly to the establishment and formation of the United Nations, unlike other countries that used to welcome Hitler with flowers. We ended our pact with him on 27 March 1941, and I would urge no one to forget that.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I give the floor to Ms. Çitaku for a second statement.

Ms. Çitaku: Again, I sincerely apologize for taking the Council's time, but some things should not be left unsaid.

First we are very proud that in our political landscape we do not have descendants of Milošević. We have people, young leaders, who fought Milošević and Šešelj, who were the worst criminals in Europe after

the Second World War. We are proud of the background of our leadership, unlike some others.

Second, this is not the venue to discuss ethnic and national civic identities and how they intertwine. This is not the venue to discuss who was in the Balkans first, who came in the seventh century, where they came from or whom they found there. We can have those discussions if we decide to organize a seminar. Historians can come together. They can fight, agree or disagree. I am ethnic Albanian and a proud citizen of Kosovo, and these identities coexist very well within me; one does not exclude the other.

Third, Kosovo had borders long before it had statehood. We were a federal unit in former Yugoslavia until Milošević came to power, and our borders were set long before we declared our independence.

Fourth, our independence is not a product of a secessionist movement. Our independence is the product of the consensual dissolution of Yugoslavia. It is not only Kosovo; there are also Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia, Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia. So there is no secessionist movement.

Fifth, as to the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, there was a long process of negotiations under the auspices of the United Nations, and there was a proposal by former President Martti Ahtisaari for Kosovo to declare independence.

Sixth, there was a ruling from the International Court of Justice, upon Serbia's request, to verify the legality of Kosovo's declaration of independence, and the ruling was unambiguous and crystal-clear. Kosovo was within its rights when it declared independence. That is according to the International Court of Justice, not me, and I suggest that Mr. Dačić go back and read it because apparently he has forgotten it.

Seventh, Kosovo is not a perfect place. I am not trying to say that Kosovo is a perfect place. We have lots of problems. We have much more to do in terms of the rule of law, fighting organized crime and corruption and in creating better opportunities for all of our citizens, but these are not challenges unique to Kosovo. One finds these challenges in most of the countries of the Western Balkans. Frankly speaking, Kosovo is no longer even in the top 30 countries in terms of asylum-seekers in Europe. Serbia is way ahead of us. Does that mean that Serbia is a failed country? No.

Again, in terms of Serbians living in Kosovo, I would ask the Council to bear with me for just one minute. These are the Central Election Commission's numbers from this year's elections. In the municipality of Novobërdë, there were 9,617 Serb votes; in Shtërpcë, 13,902; in Ranillug, 5,689; in Partesh, 4,664; in Klokot, 5,689; and in Gracanicë, 21,411. In the four northern municipalities, there were 58,138 such votes. All together, there were 123,774 votes, and we all know that people over 18 vote. So if we have this number of voters, what is the number of citizens? Again, I am not saying that all Serbs were bad, but the numbers that were cited here are simply not real.

Finally, to conclude, I urge everyone to come and visit Kosovo, and they will see with their own eyes what Kosovo is.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.